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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 30 (*continued*)

United Nations reform: measures and proposals

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/53/463, A/53/676)

Notes by the Secretary-General (A/52/849, A/52/850, A/52/851 and Corr.1 and Add.1)

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): At the outset, I would like to express once again the Russian delegation's gratitude to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for initiating the United Nations reform process, which literally encompasses all its structures. Some of the reforms have already been successfully completed and some are under operational implementation, while others, mainly those of a long-term nature, are being actively debated and fine-tuned.

Considering that agenda item 30 includes issues pertaining to rather diverse themes, our delegation would like to outline concisely its position on all issues under consideration while reserving its right to present, as appropriate, more detailed comments at a later stage. This also pertains to the report just issued on the implementation of United Nations reform measures (A/53/676). We are studying the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of a number of reform measures, but consider that such serious documents should not be presented at the last minute before the discussion, but rather should be presented in advance.

Allow me to focus on specific elements of the agenda item before us. Russia supports real reform of the activities of the United Nations system in the sphere of the environment and human settlements. We view positively the efforts undertaken by the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements under the chairmanship of Mr. Toepfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). We also welcome the report the Task Force has submitted for our consideration and the relevant report of the Secretary-General. The recommendations contained in it generally follow the lines of the Nairobi Declaration of the Governing Council of UNEP, the Habitat II Conference and the sixteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, and create a good framework for constructive dialogue.

We support the proposal to establish an environmental management group under the chairmanship of the Executive Director of UNEP. We believe that the right approach to this body has been chosen, aimed at efficiently solving emerging problems and achieving concrete results. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the group does not duplicate the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development.

We view positively the recommendations on strengthening interaction among environmental conventions and their support by UNEP. However, in our

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view, at this stage, the proposals on geographical relocation of conventions and the development of so-called umbrella conventions appear to be somewhat premature. We believe we should follow a step-by-step approach in this area.

The proposed measures covering the Nairobi-based organizations of the United Nations system deserve to be supported. In particular, we consider the integration and rationalization of administrative services of UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to be very useful within the framework of the United Nations Office at Nairobi. We think that time has come for a closer programme correlation between UNEP and Habitat, while taking into account their specificities and ensuring the preservation of their autonomy. We are also prepared to consider constructively the proposals of the Secretary-General on the administrative strengthening of the United Nations Office at Nairobi within the framework of the draft United Nations budget for the next biennium.

The recommendations on strengthening the capacity of UNEP and Habitat in the field of information, monitoring, assessment and early warning go in the right direction and correspond, in our view, to the primary mandates of these bodies.

The proposals on the reorientation of the activities of the UNEP regional offices to provide assistance to Governments on the entire range of environmental problems and the formulation of regional priorities are aimed at improving practical results in their work. It is correct to raise the issue of the importance of establishing closer relations between the regional offices, United Nations system organizations located in the same place and potential donor organizations.

The proposal to hold annual sessions of the UNEP Governing Council at the ministerial level is interesting. But the question arises in this context as to the relationship between the new forum and the high-level segment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. In considering this proposal we should fully acknowledge that its implementation will entail rethinking the role of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). It is important, in our view, to prevent steps aimed at reforming the environmental sector of the United Nations from undermining the role of the CSD and jeopardizing its productive work.

The recommendation to make the membership of the Governing Council of UNEP universal raises many questions. In our opinion, the arguments in favour of such a decision cannot completely dispel the doubts about the value it would add.

The strengthening of the role of UNEP as an implementation agency of the Global Environment Facility deserves to be supported, taking into account its catalytic functions and scientific potential. In principle, we have no objections to the set of recommendations on strengthening the relations of UNEP and Habitat with non-governmental organizations, business and organizations of civil society. However, the idea of establishing a special status for representatives of local authorities under the Commission on Human Settlements appears to be insufficiently developed and should be approached very cautiously.

The proposal to reconstitute the Trusteeship Council as the forum through which Member States exercise their collective trusteeship for the integrity of the global environment and common areas such as the oceans, the atmosphere and outer space seems debatable and requires further comprehensive consideration. In this case, we would in fact be dealing with the elimination of one of the principal United Nations bodies and the establishment of a new one. Clearly, the provisions of Chapter XIII of the United Nations Charter with regard to the specific functions and mandates of the Trusteeship Council and its membership cannot simply be adjusted. In such a case we would have to rewrite the entire chapter of the Charter.

Furthermore, given the global nature of specific issues falling under the mandate of a new body, it would be rather difficult from the legal point of view — even if it were possible — to list them all in the Charter. This in turn would inevitably lead to the duplication and substitution of the functions of a new body and, as a consequence, to the gradual diminishing of its authority. As can be seen from document A/52/849, the new forum is conceived as a high-level council that could take a comprehensive, strategic and long-term view of global trends and provide policy guidance in monitoring global environment and sustainable development. This seems to imply the subordination to a high-level council of intergovernmental organizations and forums dealing with a broad range of similar issues at the sectoral level. It is very debatable how this would be implemented in practice.

We welcomed the decision by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session to designate its fifty-fifth session the Millennium Assembly, and we hope that during that session ideas on the renewal of the United

Nations aimed at effective adaptation to the tasks and challenges of the twenty-first century will be further developed. However, we believe that in the process of the practical implementation of measures proposed by the Secretary-General, due emphasis should be placed on the need to minimize expenses, given the current difficult financial situation of the Organization.

The proposal to establish a Special Commission at the ministerial level within the framework of the Millennium Assembly seems to our delegation not to be fully justifiable and to be difficult to implement, first and foremost because of the overloaded agenda of Foreign Ministers. At the same time, we have noted rather flexible wording in this regard in the note in document A/52/850, and we are prepared constructively to consider possible alternative proposals on the level of representation in such a Commission, as well as on its agenda, including the range of specialized agencies to be reviewed.

Finally, as we have already stated, the Russian delegation supports the proposal on sunset provisions. We consider it to be quite a useful idea aimed at increasing effectiveness in the implementation of United Nations programmes and activities. Its approval would, indeed, as the Secretary-General notes, facilitate the strengthening of the General Assembly in reviewing and monitoring the mandates approved by Member States. In this context, it would perhaps be worthwhile to propose that the Committee for Programme and Coordination and other relevant bodies of the General Assembly consider the possibility of expanding such practices to current mandates.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the members of the Secretariat for their efforts in the preparation of the various reports on the question of United Nations reform. My delegation associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

As we approach the next century, greater and greater demands are being placed on the United Nations to deal with a multiplicity of issues, such as development, international peace and security, the environment, population, promotion of human rights, humanitarian disasters and intra-State conflicts. Yet the United Nations remains handicapped in dealing with these issues on a sustained basis. Thus, in our view, if the United Nations is to remain a relevant and effective international instrument for addressing international challenges, concerns and issues, its capacity to meet them must be enhanced.

We recognize the important initiatives taken by the Secretary-General to make the Organization more efficient, effective and responsive to the needs of Member States. We are pleased to note that at its last session the General Assembly endorsed several of his reform proposals. We welcome those decisions, which are aimed at strengthening the Organization to enable it to implement fully and effectively all mandated programmes and activities, as well as enhancing its capacity in meeting the changing needs and requirements of the Member States as we prepare for the next century.

We reiterate the view that the primary objective of any further reform efforts should be to strengthen the role of the United Nations in promoting international cooperation for development and to restore development issues to the centre of the United Nations agenda, inasmuch as the majority of the Members are developing countries. It is essential for any reform process to be predicated on agreed priorities of the Organization and the key principles inherent in the United Nations Charter. We wish to add that without assured and adequate financial and political support from Member States, United Nations reform will ultimately become an exercise in futility.

At the current session, the General Assembly will continue its consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals for long-term changes. We agree with others that these proposals should be considered in an open and transparent manner to enable all Member States to participate not only in discussions of the issues but, more importantly, in the negotiation of draft resolutions.

Let me now comment on the various reports and notes of the Secretary-General before us on the status of implementation of the reform measures. In resolution 52/12 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the actions described in his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform". We regret, however, the late issuance of the report, and we reserve the right to comment on it at a later time.

At this stage, we wish to recall the decision of the General Assembly, in resolution 52/214, on the need to comply with the six-week rule in the issuance of United Nations documents.

We reiterate our full support for the United Nations programmes on environment and human settlements. We reaffirm the importance we attach to the achievement of

the goals of sustainable development and the full and effective implementation of Agenda 21.

My delegation is grateful for the Secretary-General's report on environment and human settlements, as well as the report of the United Nations Task Force, headed by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Mr. Klaus Toepfer. The Secretary-General's report contains recommendations for action by the Secretariat, as well as by intergovernmental bodies. We believe that these recommendations deserve careful and in-depth consideration by Member States. In this regard, we support the view that this report must be considered in a manner that will allow all Member States the opportunity to participate in its discussion and sufficient time to reflect on these recommendations.

On the new concept of trusteeship, the Secretary-General, in his report on renewing the United Nations, proposed that the Trusteeship Council be reconstituted as the forum through which Member States exercise collective trusteeship over the global environment and common areas such as the oceans, atmosphere and outer space, and that in the process it would serve as a link between the United Nations and civil society in addressing these areas of global concern.

The proposed change in the mandate of the Trusteeship Council calls for an amendment to the Charter of the United Nations. We note that there are existing procedures and mechanisms for effective dialogue with major groups in matters related to the environment and sustainable development. We also note the recommendation of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements for the possible role of a reconstituted Trusteeship Council in addressing these global areas of concern. We believe that the proposal should be thoroughly considered, bearing in mind the complexities involved in amending provisions of the Charter.

The General Assembly decided at its last session to designate the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly the Millennium Assembly. It further decided that the various aspects of the Secretary-General's proposal in this regard be considered at the current session.

We believe that the Millennium Assembly accords us, the Member States, with a historic opportunity to renew our commitment to the goals and objectives enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It is imperative to begin the preparatory work for this important event. The task before us is to identify and to agree on the core issues for consideration by the Millennium Assembly, including the convening of the high-level segment referred to as the Millennium Summit.

In the current report, the Secretary-General suggests a different approach from his earlier proposal and proposes to submit a report on the theme "The United Nations in the twenty-first century", which will draw on three main sources. We believe that it is important to take into account the views, concerns and interests of Member States in the preparation of the report. We are open to suggestions as to the procedure for consideration of this proposal in all its aspects and can support the recommendation that the question of the Millennium Assembly be considered as a separate item from the current one.

Concerning time limits of new initiatives, we have taken note of the proposal of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/52/851 and Add.1, that initiatives involving new organizational structures and/or major commitments of funds be subjected to time limits, which would be reflected, at the outset, in the relevant resolutions and decisions establishing their mandates. We further note that this proposal has far-reaching implications on the existing regulations and rules governing programme planning and budgetary practices and procedures.

In this regard, we support the view of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China that it is of utmost importance for the relevant United Nations bodies, such as the Committee for Programme and Coordination, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee, to undertake a thorough study of the Secretary-General's proposal. Such an approach will enable the General Assembly to benefit from their technical advice and to take an informed decision on the matter.

Mr. Smith (Australia): Australia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on environment and human settlements, which contains in its annex the report of the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements. The direction it takes in strengthening and focusing United Nations activities in the environmental area is encouraging. In particular, Australia supports the report's general theme of integrating activities to increase efficiency. We agree there is scope for better linkages between the Conventions to achieve synergies and

promote coherence of policies and actions on the environment throughout the United Nations.

The report also advocates an increased focus for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on environmental policy rather than on administrative issues. This is an approach we endorse strongly. UNEP should increasingly play a valuable role in stimulating cooperative action by engaging Governments, of both developing and industrialized countries, in the development of environmental policy.

We would nonetheless have preferred a greater coverage of financial issues. The report refers to strengthening UNEP activities and the need for additional funding. We believe, however, that further work is still needed to focus UNEP priorities and streamline its work agenda. We also believe that internal reform of UNEP, such as implementation of the recommendations of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, should also remain a priority, to complement the broader reforms of the programme.

We look forward to the recommendations put forward by the Secretary-General in part III of his report being incorporated into a coherent strategy as soon as possible. We support the idea of having a group designed to improve coordination within the United Nations Secretariat on environment issues — the environmental management group. However, it would be helpful to receive further information on how the environmental management group would improve on the existing Inter-Agency Environment Coordination Group.

Given the urgency we attach to attaining stability and strengthening management of UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), we support the current designation of Mr. Toepfer as Director-General of the United Nations office at Nairobi. We believe, however, that this arrangement should be subject to the extent of the demands placed on the position and welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to consider further the full implementation of this recommendation.

Having dealt with matters that are within the responsibility of the Secretary-General, I now want to address briefly those recommendations in the report which are the responsibility of Member States.

First, I would like to comment on linkages among, and support to, environmental and environment-related Conventions. We recognize the growing problems arising from the fragmentation of the international environment agenda and support the report's long-term strategic goal of strengthening the linkages between the conventions to achieve synergies and promote coherence of policies and actions. We agree with the importance of improving UNEP's monitoring and assessment capacity and support efforts to improve coordination and discussion of cross-cutting issues between the conventions.

Secondly, the recommendations regarding intergovernmental forums are wide-ranging. While we endorse the essential objective of strengthening UNEP meetings as high-level forums in which ministers discuss key policy issues rather than administrative issues, we have some reservations about certain aspects of the proposals in the report.

The existing high-level environment calendar is already very crowded. We believe it would be difficult for ministers to attend an additional meeting every year: it should be biennial. Care should also be taken not to interfere with the programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development or to detract from efforts to improve the Commission's own work practices.

At this stage we are not convinced of the merits of the case for universal membership of the UNEP Governing Council. The Governing Council provides for broad representation and is open to the participation of all Governments. Not only does universal membership imply considerable financial costs, but it may well make the Council unwieldy and less efficient.

Thirdly, I would like to refer to the involvement of major groups. Consistent with Australia's recognition of the contributions of non-governmental organizations to the development and practical implementation of international policy, we support the facilitation and encouragement of involvement by non-governmental organizations in UNEP and Habitat. At the same time, the involvement of non-governmental organizations, including from business and industry, as the Task Force suggests, in line with the standards of the Commission on Sustainable Development, would be a major change for UNEP and, in the nature of all changes, would require careful handling.

Allow me to turn briefly to other issues covered by this agenda item.

Australia was pleased to support the decision taken at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly

welcoming the Secretary-General's proposal to designate the Assembly's fifty-fifth session the Millennium Assembly. The Millennium Assembly is an opportunity to look seriously and strategically at the challenges the Organization is facing as we enter the twenty-first century. It is an opportunity to look at whether the Organization is geared to meet those challenges and identify areas where recalibration might be needed. It is an opportunity we should not squander by getting lost in elaborate preparatory processes or allowing only empty ceremonial events to result. We look forward to further discussion on this subject under your guidance, Mr. President, and that of the Secretary-General.

One area where Australia has long felt some recalibration of the Organization is necessary is the electoral group system. The shortcomings of the existing electoral group configuration, which has not seen change for over 30 years, are well known. As we underlined in our statement in the general debate at the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, and again in the general debate this year, there are substantial disparities in the size of the various groups and an inadequate level of representation available to many subregions, including Australia's own geographical region of East Asia and the Pacific. We have recognized that reconfiguration of the electoral group system is not something we should rush. But we sense a growing interest in the issue. It is an anachronism that needs to be addressed and an element of reform that merits attention. We repeat our suggestion that it would be timely to begin to discuss the principles on which a new system could be built and to exchange views on how to proceed.

Allow me to conclude with a simple restatement of Australia's commitment to contributing to the ongoing reform of the United Nations. As we said in the general debate, this commitment derives not from a preoccupation with reform for its own sake, but from a desire for the Organization to work better. This is the responsibility of both Member States and the Secretariat, working in partnership. It needs to be systematic and purposeful, both in the formulation of new proposals and in the implementation of proposals already agreed. We look to the Secretary-General to guide us, as he has done so well thus far, by initiating a track 3 reform process.

Mr. Albin (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation would first of all like to thank the Secretary-General for the documentation submitted at this session on the item entitled "United Nations reform: measures and proposals".

In a world of constant change and transformation, adaptation, renewal and reform have become essential qualities in the lives of human beings and their institutions in order to meet the challenges of the modern world in a timely and efficient way. Convinced of this, Mexico supported and continues to support the reform effort undertaken on the initiative of the Secretary-General. I wish to express once again my country's appreciation for the vision and dedication of the Secretary-General in this process of renewal and strengthening of the United Nations.

Mexico believes that on the whole the progress achieved in the implementation of the actions undertaken by the Secretary-General and of the reform measures adopted by the General Assembly is satisfactory. We must continue to work, and I therefore wish to refer to a few specific aspects of the issues before us today.

Mexico is committed to the strengthening and the effective and efficient functioning of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. In this respect, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for the preparation of his report contained in document A/53/463 and its annex.

My Government appreciates and concurs with the direction and objectives of the set of recommendations produced by the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements and looks forward to the opportunity to make our specific comments on their substance, including those recommendations identified by the Secretary-General as measures that could be implemented by him or by the Executive Director. Nevertheless, I would like to mention one aspect that is of particular interest to my country.

The fifth special session of the UNEP Governing Council urged the Executive Director of UNEP, among other things, to

> "ensure that regional issues pertaining to the programme preparation, prioritization and implementation processes of the United Nations Environment Programme are a part of its core mandate" (*A/53/25, annex I, decision SS.V/1, part II, para. 15 (b)*)

and to

> "ensure a clear definition of the functional and structural relationship between the United Nations

Environment Programme and its regional offices". (*ibid., para. 16*)

Unfortunately, the report of the Secretary-General and its annex deal only in an isolated and superficial way with the subject of the decentralization of UNEP activities and the strengthening of its regional offices. Recommendations 7 (c) and 12 not only consider the subject indirectly, but also do not seem to respond appropriately to the provisions of paragraph 4 (b) of the Nairobi Declaration, in which our environment ministers considered that

> "Regionalization and decentralization should be strengthened through the increased involvement and participation of regional ministerial and other relevant forums in the United Nations Environment Programme process, complementary to the central coordinating role of the Programme's headquarters in Nairobi". (*A/S-19/5, annex, part I, para. 4 (b)*)

At the same time, the recommendations do not reflect the progress and inputs emanating from the processes of dialogue and political agreement on environmental issues at the regional level, thus side-stepping, *inter alia*, the commitment undertaken by UNEP at the eleventh Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Peru in March this year.

The delegation of Mexico reiterates the priority that it attaches to the strengthening of UNEP as a cornerstone for analysis and action in an increasingly complex framework of multidisciplinary and institutional interaction. The work undertaken by the Task Force is moving in the right direction and deserves the appreciation and support of the General Assembly. At the same time, we believe that room should be made for intergovernmental discussion in order to enrich the substance of the recommendations and thus solidify the commitment of Member States to the strengthening of UNEP.

The report on the implementation of reform activities was circulated only two days ago, so I cannot take a stand on its contents. Nonetheless, I wish simply to reiterate Mexico's commitment to the reform process and to reaffirm our confidence in the Secretary-General in the discharge of the functions assigned to him by the Charter and in particular in the implementation of the actions involved in his reform initiative, in accordance with the provisions of resolution 52/12 A.

Turning to the Secretary-General's proposal to reorganize the Trusteeship Council, the Mexican Government believes that the international community currently has at its disposal a framework of regimes and mechanisms for dealing with questions relating to the environment and shared zones such as the oceans, the atmosphere and outer space. While there is always room for improvement, those diverse legal instruments are working reasonably well. It would be advisable, given their specific, specialized and binding nature, for the necessary adjustments and reforms to come directly from them.

In short, we already have enough legal resources and institutional machinery to deal with these issues. We do not consider it necessary to undertake a new effort of constitutional reform in this respect.

As was very rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General in paragraph 1 of the note contained in document A/52/850,

> "The year 2000 constitutes a unique and symbolically compelling moment for Member States to articulate and affirm an animating vision for the United Nations in the new era."

My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for the Millennium Assembly proposals. We believe that these will provide a solid foundation for our work so that under your leadership, Mr. President, we can adopt at this session a decision on the convening, the format and the objectives of the Millennium Assembly, as well as on the timetable and the preparatory framework that need to be elaborated by the Secretary-General and the Member States. I would assure the Assembly of the active participation of the Mexican delegation towards this end.

Lastly, I should like to convey the Mexican delegation's full readiness to continue to participate in the consultations on the question of setting limits and time-frames for new initiatives. While Mexico supports this proposal, we believe that its implementation will require the establishment of clear and objective procedures, criteria and parameters.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): Since the Secretary-General initiated the reform process last year by submitting a package of far-reaching measures and proposals, the issue of renewal of the United Nations has been present in all our deliberations. Developments during the last session of the General Assembly and during the general debate at the current session

demonstrated that no one can seriously question the need to undertake overall changes in this world Organization.

As we all recall, intensive informal consultations in a plenary format, complemented by a series of so-called informal informals conducted by the President of the previous session with the help of the Friends of the President, culminated in the adoption of two resolutions, 52/12 A and B, which confirmed that the reform process was clearly on track. Those decisions also fuelled our expectations that the spirit of consensus would lead us towards further progress in this important undertaking. But at the same time, it was only an initial step on the long road towards a comprehensive transformation of this Organization.

We therefore hope that under your able leadership, Mr. President, this process will be given new impetus. You can count on the full cooperation of our delegation in this endeavour.

My delegation welcomes the opportunity to discuss the reports and the notes submitted by the Secretary-General under this agenda item. At this stage, I would like to comment on some of these documents.

Concerning the report contained in document A/53/463, in general we endorse the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements, under the chairmanship of the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In our view, their practical implementation would be very helpful in addressing, in a concrete manner, the pressing problems of environment and sustainable development faced by the international community.

At the same time, we consider that the activities of the Task Force should be of a universal nature. It is regrettable that the Eastern European Group was not given the opportunity to take part in its work.

Some of the proposals, in particular 11, 12 and 13, require further thorough consideration by the relevant intergovernmental bodies, including the General Assembly. Our delegation stands ready to take an active part in such deliberations in the spirit of last year's negotiations.

Recommendation 13 (a) on a global economic forum is quite interesting, but in its implementation we should clearly identify the mandate of such a forum in order to avoid any overlap with the work of other intergovernmental bodies such as the high-level segment of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

It is important, therefore, to translate all these recommendations into enhanced, coordinated actions by the entire United Nations system. Similarly to the approach taken to the initial reform proposals of the Secretary-General, their implementation requires further decisions and measures to be taken at different levels by the Secretariat, by the relevant intergovernmental bodies, and by the Governments themselves.

Regarding the report on the status of the implementation of actions described in the report of the Secretary-General "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the Secretary-General in continuing the implementation of various reform actions.

We welcome in particular the ongoing process of reform in the social and economic sectors of the United Nations. We believe, however, that there is a need for a further strengthening of the interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), especially with regard to the implementation of the plans of actions of major United Nations conferences in the socio-economic fields.

The first steps undertaken by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) also deserve a positive assessment. Its transparent and dynamic work has allowed the strengthening of the Resident Coordinator system and the harmonizing of the activities of the relevant funds and programmes.

We associate the most significant strides in the area of development activities with the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). It is still premature today to make any definitive judgments about the UNDAF pilot projects launched in 18 countries, but we are looking forward to seeing the first results of this endeavour. In our view, UNDAF could help to concentrate the development efforts of the United Nations system as a whole and to establish an effective cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions on the basis of partnership.

We also are encouraged by the recent decision of the UNDP/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Board on funding strategies. We hope that the

proposed funding framework might help to overcome the financial crisis in the United Nations development activities.

In this connection, I must note that the Secretary-General's proposal contained in document A/52/1009 for transfer of funds to the Development Account represents an explicit deviation from the original concept of its formation. Let us recall that the General Assembly, in its resolution 52/12 B, envisaged that all funds to be transferred to the Development Account should be accumulated as a result of the efficiency measures taken in this Organization. Our delegation therefore cannot accept the new proposal by the Secretary-General regarding the sustainability of the Development Account based on making appropriations among the Member States under the regular budget.

I would like to underline that, in our view, the Development Account should be formed only through the transferring of funds saved as a result of improving the efficiency of the everyday work of the United Nations Secretariat.

The delegation of Ukraine also welcomes the paper on the Millennium Assembly, which, we believe, could serve as a useful guideline for launching the process of preparing for this important event. We also support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Millennium Assembly a synthesis of the major substantive and institutional implications of the previous events related to the work of the Organization as a whole.

In our opinion, the time has come to determine the main topic on which the Millennium Assembly should concentrate. Otherwise, as many speakers have already stated, we risk convening a merely ceremonial meeting.

In this context, my delegation supports the proposal of the European Union to start consideration of these issues in the format of informal consultations of the plenary chaired by the President of the General Assembly, and that the first meeting in this format be convened before the end of the current session.

With regard to document A/52/851, I would simply endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation that any new initiative should be subject to time limits and that such limits should be stipulated in the relevant resolutions and decisions.

The reform process of the United Nations will be incomplete if it does not embrace the Security Council. This is the key issue in the whole undertaking aimed at renewing this Organization. Unfortunately, our efforts in this direction have reached a point of stagnation, and this situation was confirmed in the course of the recent discussion of the relevant agenda item. In this connection, I would like to recall what the President of Ukraine said in his statement to the fifty-second session of the General Assembly:

> "The most important thing now is to transcend nationally focused approaches by taking into account the common interests of the international community." *(A/52/PV.6, p. 5)*

Finally, our delegation believes that all the recommendations of the Secretary-General now before us deserve thorough consideration. If we really want to see this Organization reformed, we must prove this by our practical deeds. In short, we must revitalize the process. The authority and efficiency of the United Nations today and in the future depend entirely on all of us, the Member States, and therefore we should continue to be the major players.

Mr. Zaki (Pakistan): It is an honour for me to participate in the debate on such a crucial issue as "United Nations reform: measures and proposals".

First of all, I must compliment the Secretary-General for his effective leadership in promoting the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

The United Nations is the symbol of the international community's firm resolve to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to ensure respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples. Pakistan is fully committed to achieving these goals for humanity in cooperation with all nations of the world.

We are therefore in favour of all efforts for reform that would strengthen the centrality of the role of the United Nations and its Charter. For these reasons, Pakistan has fully shared the widespread interest that has been generated on this issue in the world's capitals.

The debate today therefore marks an important occasion for all of us. It should give us an opportunity to look back at a year of a reform process to which Member

States devoted energetic efforts and the success of which was a top priority for them.

We have been somewhat disappointed by the fact that this opportunity has been denied to us. We will be unable, today, to draw up a balance sheet and see how far the efforts of the Member States and the Secretariat have met with success, because the Secretariat did not produce the report on the status of implementation of actions, contained in document A/53/676, on time.

Regarding the reform process, it had been agreed that the Secretariat could proceed with the implementation of those actions outlined in the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/51/950 that were within the Secretary-General's power to implement, taking fully into account the views expressed by the Member States during the debate at that time. The report requested under resolution 52/12 A was delivered to delegations only on 23 November 1998, when the Assembly began its deliberations on this crucial issue. It needs thorough study by the Member States to ensure that the implementation of actions by the Secretariat was in line with the directive given by the Member States.

For the moment, therefore, my delegation will not comment on the content of document A/53/676. We would, however, support the resumption of this discussion at an appropriate time so that the Assembly can consider this issue of such importance for the future of our Organization. I will, however, avail myself of this opportunity to make some observations on the process initiated under action 12 of the report of the Secretary-General on reform.

We have before us a report entitled "Environment and human settlements", which is contained in document A/53/463. In this regard, my delegation associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

In our view, the Second Committee would be the most appropriate forum to consider this report. We will coordinate our positions with the JCC. Our own assessment, however, goes along with the views of the Secretary-General, and we view the recommendations of the Task Force positively.

In regard to action 12, my delegation had encouraged the efforts of the Secretary-General to streamline the work of the United Nations relating to human settlements and the environment. We are pleased to see the report submitted by the Task Force to the Secretary-General. The Task Force was guided by some of the most eminent experts in the field. We congratulate them for the submission of a comprehensive and analytical report.

This report has been highly commended by the Nairobi chapter of the Group of 77. The views of the G-77 in Kenya are most valuable for our work because our counterparts there closely monitor the organizations we are dealing with. The Member States, as well as the Secretariat, should also bear in mind the points underscored by the Nairobi chapter of the G-77 for further clarification, caution and consultations.

Pakistan would like to support the recommendation of the Task Force for the establishment of an environmental management group under the chairmanship of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The environmental management group should make every effort to attain what the Secretary-General has termed as

> "sustainable equilibrium between economic growth, poverty reduction, social equity and the protection of the Earth's resources, common and life-support systems." *(A/53/463, para. 2)*

We agree with the Task Force that the Secretary-General, through the Executive Director of UNEP, invite the Governments and conferences of parties to consider the implications of operational inefficiencies and costs arising from the geographical dispersion of convention secretariats and ways of overcoming this problem. We stated our views clearly on this issue in the debate on reform, and we are happy to note that the Task Force has taken a similar view.

We are particularly appreciative of the set of recommendations aimed at exploitation of the synergy deriving from the co-location of UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

In extending our support to the recommendations focused on enhancing the contribution and role of civil society and non-governmental organizations, we would like to place greater emphasis on the action that the Secretariat should take with UNEP, Habitat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to identify and make provisions to meet the needs of southern non-governmental organizations. We also recommend that necessary steps should be taken to clarify

the points raised by the Nairobi chapter of the G-77 on recommendations 18 (b) and (c).

My delegation can also go along with the recommendation to hold extensive deliberations within UNEP to provide input for the Millennium Assembly and Forum and also to reflect on the future role of the Trusteeship Council.

While we will return later to the report on the implementation of actions contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/950), I would like to express my views on two other issues to which my delegation attaches great importance — namely, time limits for new initiatives and the Millennium Assembly. With regard to time limits, I would like to draw the Assembly's attention to paragraph 61 of the Final Document of the twelfth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held at Durban in September 1998, which directed all members of the Non-Aligned Movement to fully examine the impact of this proposal on the programmes and activities of the Organization. We will continue to coordinate within the Non-Aligned Movement and the G-77 to reach a joint position on this issue.

With respect to the Millennium Assembly, we are looking forward to this event that would mark the advent of the new millennium for Member States and the United Nations. We suggest that the Member States should seize this opportunity to chart the course of the United Nations for the years to come. For this purpose, it would be advisable that an open-ended working group of the General Assembly be established immediately to coordinate Member States' contributions to that important forum.

In conclusion, we hope that the Assembly will be able to initiate its discussion on document A/53/676, on the implementation of actions, so that Member States can give their considered views in the near future.

Ms. Drayton (Guyana): In 1984, during the thirty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar exhorted delegations to

> "look back at the road we have travelled, distil the experience and set out again refreshed and with a new determination. The purposes for which the United Nations was set up are essential for the future of our planet. The vision expressed in the Charter remains, and we should rally to it." (*A/39/1, p. 6*)

This injunction is as valid today as it was then.

As we review our efforts to translate the Charter's vision into reality, I wish, on behalf of the States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) represented at the United Nations to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the efforts which he has made to improve the functioning of the Secretariat. We commend in particular the establishment of the post of Deputy Secretary-General and the appointment made.

The Deputy Secretary-General's mandate to address development issues responds to the calls of Member States for a greater focus and concentration of resources on this core area of the United Nations activities. We are pleased at the increased level of efficiency which has been achieved in the field since the implementation of the most recent reforms and look forward to continued progress.

With respect to the overall reform and strengthening of the United Nations, the report of the Secretary General entitled "Environment and human settlements" (A/53/463) provides a set of guidelines for improving the delivery and impact of the United Nations in the area of environment and settlements. We recognize the need for detailed consideration of the policy recommendations contained in the report and support the call of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China for this to be carried out through an open and transparent process. CARICOM is flexible as to the mechanism which is utilized but urges that there should be no scheduling conflicts with other meetings.

We all know that the root causes of most conflicts lie mainly in economic insecurity. Therefore, in order to fulfil its primary mandate, the United Nations should concentrate as a matter of priority on the promotion of the economic stability of countries. So far, all endeavours to redress the serious imbalance existing between the economies of the industrialized nations and those of developing countries have produced very meagre results. The dialogue between North and South on development issues has not led to any meaningful negotiations for more balanced economic relations or for the reduction of poverty and conflict in our countries of the South. This is mainly due to the confrontational nature of past exchanges. It is only within the last year that we have been able to reach agreement on a process for global negotiations on financing and development under the aegis of the United Nations.

Other elements of the reform process are before intergovernmental bodies. Regarding the proposal for sunset provisions, we await with interest the evaluation of this proposal by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. We consider, however, that every effort should be made to ensure that the mandates of the General Assembly are respected and fulfilled. We are especially concerned that the United Nations should have the necessary resources, human and material, to enable it to fully implement these mandates.

The promises of a new millennium offer us a fresh opportunity for a dialogue on development. CARICOM fully supports the suggestion of the delegation of Belgium to make the eradication of poverty the theme for the Millennium Assembly. The foremost obstacle to peace is poverty, which, when it can be borne, no longer explodes into conflict. It is imperative, therefore, that the problem of poverty be squarely addressed by the United Nations. Reversing the decline in official development assistance and increasing financing through new and innovative sources will help the international community reach the target of halving the incidence of poverty by the year 2015, as proposed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee.

Reaching this target will require concerted action by both developed and developing countries. We are encouraged by recent signals from some developed partners in the European Union and among the Nordic countries to strengthen their commitment to the development agenda. CARICOM looks forward to a full discussion of these issues in a transparent, intergovernmental process.

We have heard repeatedly that the United Nations should focus on doing what it does best. CARICOM delegations believe that the United Nations is unique in its ability to assist Governments in identifying the types of development policy approaches best suited to their needs, by strengthening national capacities in the management of development processes and channelling donor support for programmes that lead to sustained economic growth and sustainable development. We look to the United Nations to support national strategies for the implementation of programmes of action and commitments reached at the global conferences and summits of the United Nations. The assistance should be within a framework that weighs both economic and social policy on the scales of sustainable development. The United Nations should provide, on a system-wide basis, the inputs, programme development and support necessary to address the requirements identified by developing countries.

We are reminded daily that the historical inequalities between developed and developing nations are not removed by an act of the pen. Globalization and a market economy were, we were assured, going to provide growth and assist in levelling the playing field, but as we have painfully learned in the last few months the market is driven by forces that are outside our domain. Many of our organizations of civil society, including, significantly, sections of our own private sector, are arguing for disengagement and the imposition of controls that will prevent any sudden haemorrhaging of capital from our economies.

If all of humanity is to enter the next millennium captive to a global economic system that continues to widen the distance between rich and poor countries, then all will be lost. We must ensure that the intergovernmental discussions on financing for development and the Millennium Assembly are not merely occasions for further unmet promises and commitments, but a renewed and urgent call to stem the current tide of human suffering. CARICOM would wish to see a global commitment to guaranteeing a process open to non-governmental representatives. This will ensure that the best energies and the widest expertise available to us are involved in the formulation of solutions that will ensure a system grounded in economic and social justice. We look forward to a wide-ranging process of consultations, leading to firm undertakings that will enable us to build together a United Nations fit for service in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam): At the outset, we would like to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the Chairman of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

In July of last year, the Secretary-General presented the Assembly with the report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform". It contained what the Secretary-General believed to be the most extensive and far-reaching reforms in the 52-year history of this Organization. At that time, my delegation welcomed the report and expressed its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his initiative.

With the Secretary-General's initiative, a process of substantive reform has indeed been initiated at the United Nations. The matters and proposals contained in that report were discussed and considered extensively during the last session, through the mechanism of informal

consultations of the plenary of the General Assembly. Reform was so prominent a focus of the work of the General Assembly throughout that year that the fifty-second session of the General Assembly was called the reform Assembly.

The General Assembly adopted by consensus resolutions 52/12 A and B, endorsing all the actions and a number of recommendations proposed by the Secretary-General, while requesting the continued elaboration and consideration of others. At the same time, the General Assembly requested that during the implementation of the matters that were approved, the views expressed by Member States during the process of their consideration and adoption be taken into account.

At the turn of the new millennium, the world is at a time of profound changes. In the nations' search for security and prosperity, great opportunities are combined with enormous challenges. Amid all this, globalization has been evolving as a force that is profoundly affecting each and every nation, both positively and negatively. This was clearly a prominent subject discussed and analysed during the general debate of this session.

Globalization, together with advances in science and technology, especially in information, communications and transportation, has expanded the global market, accelerated the dynamism of productive forces and produced greater changes for cooperation and development. All this has made this world more interdependent than ever. At the same time, the challenges may also do away with the achievements built over time if we as the community of nations do not combine our efforts and forge ahead with determination and effective strategies and actions.

A hurricane in Central America or a financial crisis in East Asia can hold back progress for a decade or so. Poverty, transboundary crimes, environmental degradation, conflicts, etc., continue to be major global concerns that require urgent solutions. In the face of the advances and changes of globalization, the least developed countries have always been more vulnerable and are faced with the danger of being further marginalized.

In its fifty-third year of service to mankind, the United Nations, as the most important Organization, is called upon to adapt and respond effectively to this new environment. Reform is therefore a must. The fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly, in September 2000, has been designated the Millennium Assembly. This will provide the opportunity for the leaders of the world to decide upon strategies and chart their course of actions as the world and the Organization embark upon the new millennium.

My delegation believes that for that event to be successful there must be adequate preparation through an intergovernmental and preparatory process. We shall continue to make our contribution to the forthcoming discussion of this issue.

My delegation shares the belief that at this session, the General Assembly, while it continues to consider the outstanding issues, should also take a look at the impact of the measures that have been approved. We look forward to the report prepared by the Secretary-General in this respect. We may observe that there have been initial encouraging results of the reform in connection with efficiency and cohesion.

My delegation notes that development has received greater attention and has risen to the top of the Organization's agenda. As we welcome the establishment of the post of Deputy Secretary-General, we reaffirm our conviction that this will further contribute to elevating the profile and leadership of the United Nations in the economic and social spheres, including further efforts to strengthen the United Nations as a leading centre for development policy and development assistance.

Earlier this year, the Economic and Social Council and the international financial institutions for the first time organized a joint discussion and dialogue on issues of common concern, focusing on issues of globalization, markets and development. We express our high appreciation for this, because we deem it to have been a very important exercise. The Assembly will continue its consideration of proposals, *inter alia*, on specific time limits for new initiatives, on a results-based budgeting system, and on the utilization of the development account. These proposals need to be thoroughly reviewed and assessed taking into account their implications and bearing in mind the rules and priorities of the Organization. Consideration of these and other proposals requires an open and transparent procedure that allows full and effective participation by delegations and makes possible a focused and substantive discussion.

Reform will be the product of a joint endeavour of determination, hard work, innovation and accommodation, with a view to strengthening the Organization. As it is an ongoing process, it requires constant oversight, review, evaluation and assessment.

Let us join together and move on in this common endeavour to achieve our shared goals.

Mr. Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly's debate on the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/51/950 and entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", the adoption of resolutions 52/12 A and 52/12 B and the negotiations among Governments on subsequent proposals made by the Secretary-General all show that the reform of the United Nations is not an isolated event, but an ongoing dynamic process. As part of that process, the General Assembly at its fifty-third session is again engaged in an analysis of some of the substantive proposals made by the Secretary-General. We take note of the very recent report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/53/676, and we hope that the Assembly will have an opportunity for substantive discussion of that report.

Having participated actively in the debate and in the negotiation of the proposals in the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and in the Group of 77 and China, the Cuban delegation fully supports the statement made by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Joint Coordinating Committee.

The staff of the United Nations is the principal resource available to Member States for achieving the full implementation of the mandates they define. That staff must play a vital role in the implementation of the reform proposals adopted by the General Assembly. The Cuban delegation attaches special importance to the Secretary-General's proposals for human resource management reform set out in document A/53/414. We view human resource management reform as a system; in our view, the delegation of authority advocated by the Secretary-General can be effectively brought about only in the context of a strengthened mechanism of accountability for programme administrators and of a renewed and effective system of internal justice that truly protects staff members and restores their morale and their trust. We think it would be very useful for the Secretary-General to present an operational plan that would include proposed timetables, and for the Secretariat to supply estimates of the needed resources. This information would complement the general objectives set out in document A/53/414, and would be most important.

The proposal on creating a dividend for development was viewed as among the most innovative elements of the reform package submitted by the Secretary-General. The developing countries welcomed that proposal as a way of supplementing resources allocated for development, which are now growing increasingly scarce and more heavily burdened with conditionality. We have looked forward with interest to further proposals from the Secretariat concerning the modalities and objectives of the development account, and in particular information on the list of projects that would be financed with the $13.1 million approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/221. But these additional proposals have yet to be submitted. It would be a matter for regret if the development account were to be used to reduce the budget in various sectors or to make additional cuts in staff.

We believe that it is up to Member States, in the context of the draft programme budget for the relevant biennium, to approve the main planned efficiency measures. We hope that at this session modalities for making use of the account will be adopted, that the ways in which Member States participate in the various stages of its management will be defined, and that a decision will be taken on the uses and purposes of the $13.1 million approved for the current biennium.

The proposal on results-based budgeting is also of interest. In our view, the Secretariat must provide Member States with additional documents describing the basis for the implementation of this principle, specifically proposals on result indicators, on the impact of the change in budgeting on the level of resources allocated to various sectors, on the accounting mechanisms that would be established, and on the changes in the organizational structure of the Secretariat that would be necessary to ensure the integrity of the planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation cycle, among other elements. A central element of the supplementary documents on this proposal should be an analysis of the impact that this approach to budgeting on various areas of allocation, in particular with respect to staff, consultants, experts and outside contractors.

The Cuban delegation has long been interested in the proposal on sunset provisions, as set out in documents A/52/851 and A/52/851/Add.1. In our view, the medium-term plan not only endorses the main purposes of the Organization and the mandates adopted by its Member States but also directly reflects the criteria guiding the General Assembly's political and budgetary decisions. The financial norms, rules and regulations now in force in the United Nations also reflect the basis of those purposes and mandates. In our view, it would be incorrect for the new concept of time limits to run

counter to the letter and the spirit of those norms and rules. It would not be desirable to change the purposes of the Organization in the name of maximizing the efficiency and effectiveness of the mandates adopted by the General Assembly. The Assembly must continue to have the acknowledged power, at the outset and in accordance with its own decision-making procedures, to establish the duration of each mandate and to decide on the programme and organizational structures needed to achieve the agreed objectives and mandates.

The Cuban delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report (A/53/463) on environment and human settlements; our thanks go also to the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements and, in particular, to its Chairman, Mr. Klaus Toepfer. The revitalization of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) is an undoubted priority for the United Nations. In our view, the strengthening of those institutions also requires a needed revitalization of the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The recommendations in the report of the Secretary-General are an important starting point on the way to more effective coordination and greater coherence in the areas of environment and human settlements.

In this respect, the Assembly must carefully study every recommendation, especially if we take into account the fact that, in several parts of the report, it is not clear whether the recommendations are based completely or only partially on those of the report of the Task Force. The delegation of Cuba believes that, in addition to institutional action that can be taken to reverse the current situation of these agencies, the lack of sufficient, secure and stable financial resources is the main obstacle to UNEP's and Habitat's playing a more decisive role in their respective areas.

Cuba attaches great importance to the process of preparing and holding the Millennium Assembly, as discussed by the Secretary-General in his document A/52/850. We look forward to the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General to Member States to facilitate deliberations and decision-making during the Millennium Assembly.

Nevertheless, we believe that the statements made in the general debate of the fifty-third session, as well as those made by Member States in the debate on the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, could complement the Secretary-General's report with valuable and timely elements of common interest.

Cuba believes that the process of preparing the Millennium Assembly and of negotiating its agenda and the basic documents of that important event should be a transparent exercise open to the participation and broadest possible contribution of all Member States, taking into account the positions expressed in the intergovernmental negotiation process and in the deliberations of the various regional groups and multilateral forums. No contribution from one or several States, however desirable and valuable, can replace the indispensable intergovernmental negotiation process that the Millennium Assembly requires.

We associate ourselves with those delegations that have recommended the establishment of a preparatory committee or an open-ended working group of the General Assembly for this purpose. As the Secretary-General himself says,

> "The year 2000 constitutes a unique and symbolically compelling moment for Member States to articulate and affirm an animating vision for the United Nations in the new era". (*A/52/850, para. 1*)

Cuba reiterates its full readiness to contribute, in a constructive spirit of cooperation, to the process of reforming the United Nations and to the success of the Millennium Assembly.

Mr. Azaiez (Tunisia) (*interpretation from French*): In speaking on agenda item 30, "United Nations reform: measures and proposals", I would express the full support of the Tunisian delegation for the statement delivered by the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Ambassador of South Africa, on behalf of the members of the Movement and the Group of 77. I can thus confine my statement to certain elements that I believe deserve special support.

The first question I wish to address pertains to the very principle of reform. In this context, I am pleased yet again to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the proposals he has made in his report on the reform of the Organization, designed to streamline its operations and enhance its efficiency.

My country, which participated in the various working groups on the renewal of the Organization, is aware of the importance of the objectives pursued by the

reform. Document A/53/676 on the status of implementation of actions described in the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" provides in this respect a broad spectrum of all the Organization has undertaken in a few months. Be it a matter of reforms of management, planning, peace-building or the role of the Secretariat in economic and social affairs — to cite only a few areas — to us, the work undertaken seems vast. We hope that the results we achieve will be commensurate with the efforts invested in this enterprise.

The second point I wish to touch upon pertains to the question of the environment and human settlements, addressed in document A/53/463. In this connection, Tunisia congratulates Mr. Klaus Toepfer and the Task Force he led for their excellent work. The recommendations annexed to the report deserve to be studied in an appropriate framework insofar as they are designed to generate new synergies between the various agencies and conventions currently dealing with the environment in one or another of its many aspects, such as desertification and climate change or biodiversity and chemical pollution.

Moreover, my country calls for the implementation of some of the measures proposed if they lead to better coordination of the work between environmental conventions and if they represent a first step towards improved policy coordination, as recently explained by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This should be done while ensuring that each structure has its own identity. This coordination could be undertaken within functional clusters. For instance, issues of biological resources, chemical products and waste, and marine pollution could benefit from a comprehensive approach based on their particular affinities. This is a matter of perception aimed at enhancing interaction and promoting sustained and multifaceted cooperation between existing secretariats and conventions.

In the context of coordinating the activities of various conventions arising out of the Rio Summit and their harmonization with UNEP's work programme, the approach laid out in the Task Force's report on the consolidation of the Nairobi Office deserves to be supported. Indeed, recommendation 4 of the report proposes that

> "other United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes be stimulated to establish or expand activities at Nairobi so as to transform the United Nations compound at Nairobi into a fully active United Nations Office". (*A/53/463, para. 33*)

This is a request of the African States which Tunisia strongly supports.

Lastly, I wish to touch upon certain questions that we have already had the opportunity to consider and on which we have already stated our position. The first is that of time limits for new initiatives — the so-called "sunset clauses". While it understands the arguments for efficiency underpinning this initiative, Tunisia believes that its implications have not been fully grasped and require further review and discussion.

With respect to the Millennium Assembly, the subject of the Secretary-General's note in document A/52/850, we feel that this document contains proposals that largely coincide with the way in which the international community would like to mark the Organization's activities in the next century. In our view, a careful review of these proposals is necessary.

The delegation of Tunisia is in favour of the holding of a high-level debate at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the theme "The United Nations in the twenty-first century", which would constitute the Millennium Summit. Tunisia also welcomes the Secretary-General's proposal to prepare a report on the same theme. However, it considers that the date set for his submission of this report, midsummer of the year 2000, is too late and should be advanced by at least six months so as to enable Member States to consider it and to draw the necessary conclusions before the Millennium Summit.

The main sources on which the Secretary-General intends to draw in the preparation of his report are all noteworthy. However, it is important that Member States have an opportunity to offer the Secretary-General their preliminary views on the challenges our Organization will face in the twenty-first century. This could be done in an informal session of the plenary, which could be convened in the next few months.

Mr. Valle (Brazil): As one of the delegations that had the privilege of working closely with your predecessor, Sir, in the negotiations on the Secretary-General's proposals for reform, we are pleased to acknowledge the positive results achieved by the Secretariat over the last year in implementing the

provisions of the reform, as reflected in the report in document A/53/676.

Among these results, the Senior Management Group is now fully operative, ensuring internal coherence in the work of the Organization, and the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General has proven the real value of this timely addition to the structure of the Secretariat. The various departments have undergone substantial changes. They improved their level of coordination and performance, particularly in the areas related to social, economic and humanitarian affairs. We therefore congratulate the Secretary-General for his continuing efforts to reform the Organization and better equip it to face the challenges ahead of us.

The reform process was also firmly pursued through the intergovernmental machinery. Much progress has indeed been achieved in the further consideration of the Secretary-General's proposals by the Economic and Social Council, the executive boards of the funds and programmes and the various committees of the General Assembly. We are particularly pleased with the results of the first humanitarian segment held by the Economic and Social Council, which can be further enhanced. We also welcome the agreement reached by the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme to develop a multi-year funding framework with a view to reversing the downward trend in the provision of core resources for the financing of development and technical cooperation.

It is therefore on a very positive note that the General Assembly resumes consideration of the reform issues this week. We are reassured that under your able guidance, Sir, this body will keep up the momentum and build upon the positive results already achieved.

The Brazilian delegation has studied with keen interest the various proposals for action and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the environment and human settlements. They deserve thorough consideration by the Assembly. We believe, as other delegations have already suggested, that our initial discussion on these proposals should benefit first from a frank exchange of views that could preferably take place within informal consultations of the plenary.

The Millennium Assembly will represent a unique moment for Member States to articulate their vision on the role of the Organization in a new era. We must set in motion now the preparatory work for ensuring the success of the Millennium Assembly. It is extremely important that by the end of this year we may have a clear picture of the entire process of preparations.

With that purpose in mind, we trust that a series of plenary informal consultations guided by you, Sir, could greatly benefit from the views of the Secretary-General himself on questions such as possible themes for the Millennium Summit, issues to be focused on in the report to be prepared for the Summit and procedures for the intergovernmental review of the report prior to the Summit.

We generally agree that the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations in the twenty-first century could be prepared following a process of broad consultations involving Member States and other relevant actors. This consultative process both within and outside the United Nations should be carried out during 1999 so as to ensure that the report is available for consideration by Member States early in the year 2000.

In defining the agenda and possible themes for the Millennium Assembly and its Millennium Summit we should preferably avoid a listing of issues that would inevitably lead to a fragmentation of the discussions. In this line, consideration should be given to an overarching theme that could encompass a broad perception of the role of the Organization and inspire an enriching and forward-looking debate.

Strengthening of multilateralism in the face of the new century is our common goal. The overall subject for the Millennium Summit could therefore be the new challenges to the multilateral system posed by globalization, or, in other words, how we may better equip the multilateral system to live up to the many challenges posed by globalization at the beginning of a new century. From this overall subject, specific themes could be derived, with particular attention to the areas of development, poverty eradication and disarmament.

Mr. Abdel Aziz (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I would like, first of all, to express Egypt's support for the statement that was made on behalf of the members of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 on the subject of reform in all its aspects, and especially as regards the report of the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements (A/53/463) under the chairmanship of Mr. Klaus Toepfer.

In this regard, I would like to make a few brief preliminary comments on the United Nations reform process in the field of the environment and human settlements.

First, the Egyptian delegation believes that this process must be carried out in accordance with the mechanism to be determined by the General Assembly, characterized by transparency and the participation of all governmental experts representing the Members of the United Nations. Secondly, Egypt welcomes the report of the Secretary-General and the report of the Task Force as it pertains to coordinating the activities of the United Nations in what we have called the environmental management group. Thirdly, we must maintain the independence of the United Nations Environment Programme Centre and the Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), bearing in mind the specificity of their respective activities.

Fourthly, we feel that there is a need for coordination between the different conventions. But the proposal to merge the secretariats of these conventions could lead to a decline in available resources for each of them, and this would result in the possibility of distorting the priorities of the Organization's work in the context of the various conventions, a matter which must be avoided at any cost. Fifthly, Egypt believes that it is necessary to keep the United Nations Office at Nairobi as an international centre, which is fundamental in dealing with environmental issues.

As we stand at the threshold of the new millennium, which we approach with hope and a sense of challenge, I wish to reaffirm the importance of assessing the achievements of the United Nations at present and of studying the possibility of its participating actively in the next century. The year 2000 is undoubtedly an exceptional opportunity for such consideration, and this is why Egypt has supported the Secretary-General's proposal that the fifty-fifth session be designated the Millennium Assembly. We also support the convening of a Millennium Summit at the same session to be attended by the heads of State and Government, which would adopt a final declaration or Millennium Declaration reaffirming the commitment to the principles and purposes of the United Nations in the twenty-first century and which would study the ways and means whereby the Organization can contribute to action on the aspirations and challenges of the new era.

Here I would like to affirm that the General Assembly or the Millennium Summit should not confine itself to ceremonial festivities. It should adopt a substantive document embodying the ideas, hopes and aspirations of peoples of the world in the new millennium, one which would constitute a cornerstone and a programme of action for the future.

On the basis of that principle, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt proposed that the preparatory work for the Millennium Assembly should begin at the fifty-third session. This is especially important because good preparation is essential for consensus — as experience at the United Nations, including that of the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization, has shown. The Foreign Minister said that

> "This is the next-to-last session of the General Assembly in this century. Let it be a session for reflection and preparation for the last session of the twentieth century, next year. Let us take stock of the international work of a whole century, its positive and negative aspects alike. Let us evaluate the achievements and innovations of mankind, where it failed and why. Let us list and analyse the work done and the progress made by the United Nations to crate constructive international cooperation and establish peace. Let us also talk about what remains on the international agenda and what will be left for succeeding generations to finish and accomplish.
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> "In order to evaluate the experience of the past and to chart our future course, I propose that this session create a committee to commence drafting a clear statement to history to be issued at the close of the next session. This statement should include our assessment of the past and our vision of the future. It should be issued a few days before the end of the century and the beginning of the new millennium." (*A/53/PV.15, pp. 15-16*)

Having considered the note by the Secretary-General on this item, Egypt is once again putting its ideas before the General Assembly. We reaffirm that we are ready to work in a serious, flexible, cooperative manner to ensure a successful Millennium Assembly and to fulfil the aspirations and expectations of the peoples of the world who are optimistic about the new era, the new century, and the new millennium.

I turn next to the Secretary-General's proposal on sunset provisions. At the fifty-second session, debate in

the Assembly indicated that further consultations within the groups of Member States were needed on this proposal. In this context, I reaffirm Egypt's commitment to the position of the Non-Aligned Movement as affirmed by the leaders of the Movement at Durban. This also reflects the position of the Joint Coordinating Committee of the Movement, which calls for further study of all aspects of the proposal by the relevant technical bodies, so that the General Assembly will be able to adopt a reasoned solution.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): My delegation takes the floor to express its full support for the proposed Millennium Assembly, the Special Commission on the United Nations system and the Millennium Forum, which are all facets of measures and proposals for the reform of the United Nations. We agree that the year 2000 constitutes a unique and symbolically compelling moment for Member States to articulate and affirm a new vision for the United Nations in the new era — the new millennium.

We recognize also that the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform", document A/51/950, and the action that we have collectively taken so far to implement those changes to which we have agreed do not go far enough in addressing the international realities of this decade and of the new millennium. In our view, the United Nations does not only need cosmetology; it needs to be remodelled to adapt to the new modalities of our world. In fact, in resolution 52/12 B of 19 December 1997, the General Assembly — all of us — recognized the need to consider changes of a more fundamental nature than those set out in the Secretary-General's report.

The restructuring of the regional or electoral groups is, in the view of my delegation, of paramount importance and deserves the urgent attention of all Member States. The present system of regional groups is an anachronism in our world today; it limits the participation of Member States, and in many cases confines them to playing a side-line role. As my colleague from New Zealand eloquently stated at the 64th meeting of the Assembly, during the debate on the reform of the Security Council,

> "The present regional system was put in place some 35 years ago ... This system is sadly out of date; it reflects the political geography of the 1960s, including the cold-war East-West confrontation and the immediate post-colonial period.
>
> "...
>
> "Since 1963 the membership of the Organization has almost doubled".

To bring that point home, let me note that when the present regional system was put in place some 35 years ago the Pacific was just a vast ocean of overseas colonies and territories. Today there are 14 sovereign independent States, eight of which are Members of the United Nations. Thus, unless there is a serious effort to reconfigure the present regional system, we from the Pacific region will continue, so to speak, to miss the boat here at the United Nations. But we all firmly believe in the principle of "no taxation without representation".

Many countries would like to serve in due course on all the organs of the United Nations but are prevented from doing so by the present configuration of regional groups and their limits. We would like to see an increase in the number of electoral groups and would want the new configuration be organized by geographical location. That could be done by increasing the number of subgroups within the present regional groupings or by creating new electoral groups to take account of present-day political realities. The number of regional groups could be increased from the current five to nine to create equitable geographic and democratic representation. My delegation has specific views on how this reconfiguration can be achieved, and we will be happy to make our contribution in any informal working group that might be set up to address this problem.

The Fiji delegation believes that there should be an established rule of rotation among Member countries in respect of representation on the organs, bodies, commissions and committees of the United Nations system. No Member State should be allowed to serve a second consecutive term if there are other members of its group which have not served as yet. And there is a reason for this: there are a few Member States which are de facto permanent members of United Nations bodies while there are others which have never served on them and would like to do so. The current system lends itself to such undemocratic practices.

Another area is the relationship between the General Assembly and the United Nations. My delegation believes that the General Assembly should be the paramount organ of the United Nations and that the Security Council should function in a structured relationship with the General Assembly. Revision of the Charter is, of course, long overdue, and I am aware that the initiative has already begun through the Open-ended Working Group

on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, under agenda item 59. Our delegation, however, is of the view that an overall review of the Charter should be addressed at the Millennium Assembly and placed before the Millennium Summit for adoption. The other issues I have highlighted could also be similarly dealt with.

In conclusion, let me assure members of our full support for the Millennium Assembly, the Millennium Summit, the Millennium Forum of non-governmental actors and the ministerial level Special Commission. My delegation also supports the new concept of trusteeship as well as the reconstitution of the Trusteeship Council.

Mr. Tommo Monthe (Cameroon) (*interpretation from French*): I would like first of all to associate myself with the statement made under this item on 23 November by the representative of South Africa on behalf of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China. This fundamental position has on numerous occasions been proclaimed by the higher and supreme bodies of these two important groups of States, with the equally steady support of China. Indeed, since the 1980s the United Nations has been dealing continuously — at the initiative of Member States and of the Secretary-General and his peers in the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the Joint Inspection Unit — with a series of accelerated reforms that have simultaneously affected its structures, programmes and procedures, and even its decision-making mechanisms.

The work of the Group of 18 and the important resolution 41/213 are the symbols of these many changes, which have been under way for more than 10 years. The Assembly went beyond just confirming these changes in its most recent resolutions, 52/12 A and 52/12 B, which were adopted after a thorough review of the very important report initiated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan as one of his priority actions. Since then, some of the approved measures have been implemented and others given further consideration. All this work is addressed in the new reports that have been submitted for consideration at this session, either directly in plenary or through the Fifth Committee.

We would like first of all to thank the Secretary-General for these reports and also for the complementary introductory statements. This has made it possible for the Member States to carefully follow the entire reform process here or through other deliberating bodies.

With respect to the status of the implementation of the reform decisions relating to the Secretary-General's own responsibilities as set forth in the Charter and confirmed as such in resolution 52/12, a succinct balance sheet is given in the report in document A/53/676, now under consideration. We believe that in several domains this implementation has been effectively and actively initiated. It is too early to decide whether the reforms have achieved all the intended positive effects. Furthermore, in this implementation process, the Secretary-General must redouble his efforts to take greater account of the views expressed by the Member States, particularly those of the non-aligned countries and the Group of 77.

As regards the reports on human resources management, the revolving credit fund, the development dividend, results-based or net-based budgeting and programme planning that are currently under consideration by the Fifth Committee, with the expert assistance of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee for Programme and Coordination, it is important to give the Fifth Committee time to provide the Assembly action proposals with a sound technical basis so that the Assembly can take a decision with full knowledge of the facts.

Let us emphasize that any measures suggested in this framework should avoid fragmenting the Secretariat, reducing programmes and lowering staff morale. Rather, when all is said and done, what must be continuously sought is the strengthening of analytic, forecasting and operational capacities on the basis of geographic composition, competence and a diversified distribution of structures and activities in support of the democratization of the daily conduct of the affairs of our Organization, which should not become the preserve of any State or group of States.

The question of sunset provisions or automatic time limits is an important issue, even vital for the life of the United Nations. The issue was unsuccessfully broached when the Group of 18 was working. One problem is that the issue is often taken up in a spirit of reducing activities and concomitantly reducing resources. Second, the issue's political effects — too-frequent or almost continuous haggling and negotiations — and the very great number and complexity of old, current or potential items involved threaten to further complicate the task of the various deliberative and decision-making bodies, transforming them once again into bedlam and

inappropriate quarrelling. Further, as the Secretary-General has noted, the capacity of the existing instruments available for the planning and budgeting cycle is not yet fully utilized. Within the Secretariat, the reform of attitudes is what must be more at the heart of our concerns.

In document A/52/849, the Secretary-General specifies his ideas regarding the new concept of trusteeship referred to in his first report submitted at the fifty-first session. We agree with him that, in view of the ever-increasing interdependence of nations, areas that concern the higher common interests of humanity are increasing as well. Therefore they warrant common trusteeship as regards both the vision for them and their management through the development of appropriate structures. If in order to accomplish this the current Trusteeship Council has to be given a new orientation, as the Secretary-General recommends, such an initiative should be duly considered, taking into account its political and legal implications and, above all, the possible overlap with other existing bodies such as world commissions and high-level permanent or ad hoc divisions of the Economic and Social Council or the General Assembly.

With respect to the reform proposals in the field of the environment and human settlements — the subject of the report in A/53/463 — we support the direction taken by the Secretary-General. In the final analysis, these reforms should make it possible to implement the promises to strengthen the status of the United Nations centre in Nairobi.

With respect to the Millennium Assembly, we think that above and beyond the solemnity that has been contemplated for commemorating, as is appropriate, the transition to the twenty-first century, it would be most appropriate to take this opportunity to define the strategic vision for the world of the twenty-first century, outlining in this vision the fundamental directions to be followed; from them establishing, in the form of objectives, the bases for our activities; and, finally and above all, imagining the strategies and the most appropriate ways and means to support these activities.

What is really at stake is the very basis of the planning, programming, budgeting, control and evaluation cycle, which to date has proved none too solid. We welcome the Secretary-General's proposed central theme and outline for the Millennium Assembly preparations, whose ambitious scope encompasses the national, regional and global levels. The Organization should find ways and means to enable all countries, especially the poorest ones, fully to participate in this endeavour.

Ongoing efforts in the Administrative Committee on Coordination aimed at renewing the United Nations system as a whole should be undertaken in moderation, as should the work of the Special Committee proposed by the Secretary-General, which could affect the constitutional structure of the United Nations system as a whole. That decentralized structure was conceived by our founding fathers in their wisdom with the goal of managing all of the relevant bodies democratically and in a specialized manner.

It is appropriate that, on the eve of a new century, we should deploy active and sustained efforts to determine which ideas and institutions are best suited to enabling human beings to enjoy and safeguard, for the benefit of current and succeeding generations, the varied resources that providence has so generously made available to humankind as its common heritage.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly on Monday, 23 November, at the 67th plenary meeting, I now call on the Observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*interpretation from French*): Switzerland would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on United Nations reform in the field of environment and human settlements. We commend in particular the excellent work of the Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements under the chairmanship of Mr. Toepfer, and we thank him and all the members of the Task Force for their constructive effort, undertaken in record time.

Switzerland is in full agreement with the Task Force's analysis with regard to a more coherent and effective approach in the work of the United Nations on environment and sustainable development. We must put a stop to the institutional fragmentation we have witnessed in recent years and begin to shape institutions capable of meeting the immense challenges that the international community faces in the quest for environmental, economic and social sustainability.

Before turning to the specific recommendations of the Task Force, let me quote from paragraph 44, section III, of the annex to the report one short sentence I believe to be particularly relevant: "coordination at the international level should begin at home." Reformed

structures and new methods aimed at optimizing the effectiveness of the United Nations system will bear fruit only if Governments themselves offer coordinated and consistent guidance to the various organs and agencies concerned. In this regard, most of us probably have some more work to do.

For many years Switzerland has had a fairly clear idea of the kind of efficient and well-balanced coordination it would like to see established within the United Nations system in the environmental field. Therefore we fully support the view of the Task Force that, in accordance with the Nairobi Declaration, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should play to the full its part as the lead United Nations environmental agency and enhance its coordinating role with a view to strengthening the linkages and achieving synergy among the various environmental and environment-related conventions.

We also support the recommendation that membership of UNEP's Governing Council be made universal. We believe this change to be necessary if the UNEP Governing Council is to bear primary responsibility for reviewing the environmental performance of the United Nations system and for defining priorities for action in the environmental field.

We must also ensure high-level political support for the Executive Director in the periods between sessions of the Governing Council. While this is at present the task of the high-level Committee of Ministers and Officials, a strengthened Bureau of the Governing Council might play this role in future.

The Task Force's recommendation to convene an annual, ministerial-level global environmental forum, either following the UNEP Governing Council's regular sessions or every other year at a special session, is a proposal that we find very interesting. It does, however, raise some questions with regard to the distinctive roles of UNEP and the Commission on Sustainable Development. We agree that, according to their respective mandates, the Commission on Sustainable Development should bridge and coordinate environmental, development and socio-economic elements and that UNEP should focus on environmental aspects. That distinction is quite clear in theory, but does not, however, apply in practice. In recent years, the high-level segment of the Commission on Sustainable Development has become a forum where environment ministers meet. If in future the UNEP Governing Council is to assume this role, then we should seriously rethink the functioning of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We should turn it into a global forum for sustainable development with the participation of ministers of economy, development and environment, and avoid potential overlap with UNEP high-level meetings.

In conclusion, I should like to comment on two other important Task Force recommendations concerning the linkages among conventions and the importance of taking regional issues into account. Switzerland shares the concern expressed by the Task Force about the operating costs arising from the geographical dispersion of convention secretariats. We strongly support the recommendation to ponder this situation and redress it. The co-location of new conventions with already existing conventions in the same functional cluster is certainly a good way to increase synergy and ensure greater economies of scale. However, it has become evident in recent years that the global environmental conventions are increasingly complex in character. Each convention has links not only to other conventions, but to a number of international institutions. We therefore believe that in the future we should take into account both criteria when deciding about co-location: convention secretariats should be not only grouped in the same functional cluster, but located in one of the main centres of international cooperation.

Despite the global character of some of our most pressing environmental problems, solutions can often be found only when taking into account specific regional needs and priorities. We therefore fully support the strengthening of UNEP's regional offices, and we also welcome the holding of special sessions of the Governing Council of UNEP in the various regions of the world. At the same time, we believe there is a need to strengthen the United Nations Office at Nairobi with a view to enabling UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to conduct their work under the best possible conditions.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

Before adjourning the meeting, I should like briefly to comment on the issues that we have been considering, in particular with regard to the Millennium Assembly. I noted that most of the delegations that referred to the issue in their statements reaffirmed their support for the initiative of the Secretary-General. It can be inferred from those statements that it is the wish of the General Assembly to prepare for that event by contributing ideas about its content and format. In that context, the

presidency has heard several specific proposals about how the Assembly could discuss the issue and perhaps agree on recommendations.

I believe that before taking decisions about the way in which the Assembly should consider the question of the Millennium Assembly, it would be appropriate to have an opportunity for a broad and open exchange of ideas with all the delegations of Members of the United Nations so that progress can be achieved in obtaining more precise proposals. We could then decide how to organize the Assembly in relation to its future work.

It is in this spirit that I propose to the Assembly that we should meet again informally to focus exclusively on our possible contributions to preparations for the Millennium Assembly, that we have a broad and open exchange of views next week, at a date and time to be agreed, without prejudice to the later establishment of certain procedures or mechanisms to enable the General Assembly to continue with an exchange of views and deliberations on this issue of such great importance.

If this is acceptable to the Assembly and there are no comments or objections, the presidency will convene that informal meeting in the near future, probably next week.

I should also like to point out that some delegations have referred to the fact that they have had insufficient time to examine in detail document A/53/676, on the status of implementation of actions. Given the dissatisfaction of some delegations, we will probably have to seek a further opportunity on our schedule to discuss that issue in greater detail.

Programme of work

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): On the morning of Monday, 30 November, the General Assembly will take up as its second and third items the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda item 12, "Report of the Economic and Social Council", and on agenda item 118, "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations".

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.

United Nations A/53/PV.72

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-third Session

72nd plenary meeting
Monday, 30 November 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mra (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 41

The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Draft resolution A/53/L.55

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated country Cyprus, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

The European Union first of all wishes to thank the High Representative, Mr. Carlos Westendorp, for the relentless efforts and assistance that he and his team have devoted to assisting in the establishment of a lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Elisabeth Rehn, the members of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), the members of the International Police Task Force (IPTF), the members of the Stabilization Force (SFOR), the specialized agencies of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and all other international and non-governmental organizations for the services they have rendered to the cause of peace, reconciliation and reconstruction. The European Union pays tribute to the victims of the conflict and to all those who died discharging their duties in the service of peace.

The European Union recalls that there is no alternative to the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement as the foundation of the political and economic development of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its two multi-ethnic entities. Full and swift implementation of the Peace Agreement in its entirety is a paramount obligation for all in Bosnia and Herzegovina and for the concerned neighbouring countries. The European Union continues to offer assistance and support in this endeavour in order to create the conditions for lasting peace and stability in the region. The European Union recalls, however, that this assistance remains strictly conditional upon compliance with the Peace Agreement and subsequent obligations and upon compliance with the criteria of the regional approach of the European Union, namely respect for democratic principles, the rule of law and market economic reform.

Lately we have witnessed several encouraging developments. Despite persisting violent incidents, in particular in connection with the return of refugees and displaced persons, the level of inter-ethnic violence has been dramatically reduced and a lasting cessation of hostilities has been established. The results of the

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municipal elections of 1997 were implemented with only a few exceptions. Successful general elections were held in September this year under the supervision of the OSCE. A new flag, passports, common licence plates and a common currency were introduced.

The President of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Judge McDonald, noted in her report that the last 12 months were characterized by a substantial improvement over previous years with respect to enforcement of the Tribunal's orders and compliance with obligations under international law. However, much remains to be done by entities and States of the former Yugoslavia, in particular by the Republika Srpska and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The European Union notes that there have been some positive signs on the part of the Republika Srpska of its willingness to cooperate with the Tribunal, and it expects the new Government of the entity to increase its efforts in this respect. The Union fully supports the Tribunal and recalls that as long as all those indicted are not handed over to the Tribunal, an important prerequisite for national reconciliation and the rule of law will not be met.

In this context, the European Union also reminds the neighbouring countries of their obligations under the Peace Agreement. These obligations must be fulfilled in their entirety, voluntarily and immediately. The European Union condemns the continuing refusal of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to cooperate with the Tribunal by failing to arrest and transfer indictees to the custody of the Tribunal and demands full compliance with Security Council resolution 1207 (1998).

The return of refugees and displaced persons remains a priority. A very large number of refugees and displaced persons still have not returned home for fear of acts of intimidation and violence. Measures must be taken to put an immediate end to such acts. Furthermore, urgent administrative and legal measures must be taken by all parties to allow the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons in accordance with the regional strategy of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, particularly to areas where they would be a minority, and their reintegration into their communities of origin under conditions of safety and dignity, which must include full respect for their property rights. Although freedom of movement within and between the entities has improved, much remains to be done to guarantee the free circulation of people and goods on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The European Union reaffirms that full respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, is a precondition for the restoration of a multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Functioning democratic institutions at the State, entity and local level are of paramount importance for the consolidation of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The holding of free and fair elections is only an initial step in the construction of a democratic society. The implementation of the election results and the strengthening of the central institutions depend on the sustained cooperation of all, whether Bosniac, Croat or Serb. The European Union, therefore, expects all parties concerned to work together in this endeavour. It also expects the discontinuation of all parallel structures to the common institutions.

In order to create the necessary confidence of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their Government and its institutions, the rule of law must pervade every aspect of life in the whole country. The reform of the judicial system and the restructuring of the civilian police in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for which the United Nations Mission is providing important assistance, are crucial objectives in the establishment of the rule of law.

The reform of the media sector has seen some progress in recent months. Free and independent media represent a cornerstone of democratic society. They provide for the free exchange of ideas and for a political discourse that allows citizens to make their political decisions and to partake in the administration of their country. The creation of a civil society bridging ethnic divisions and contributing to reconciliation and understanding among the citizens is one of the priorities on the way to a truly democratic and pluralistic Bosnia and Herzegovina.

One of the major problems Bosnia and Herzegovina is facing is the slow economic recovery and the slow conversion towards a free market system. This entails low foreign investment and extreme dependence on international economic and financial assistance. International assistance is now at its peak and will most probably decline in coming years. Bosnia and Herzegovina therefore needs to increase its efforts with respect to a comprehensive approach to economic reform in order to create the preconditions for a self-sustaining economy. An economic reform programme should include the framework for private sector development including privatizations and the improvement of foreign

investment conditions, the restructuring of the banking sector and capital markets, the reform of the financial system and adequate social protection. Job creation and economic revitalization at the local level are also important for the sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons.

The European Union is looking forward to the upcoming Peace Implementation Council in Madrid, which, building on the results of the Bonn and Sintra meetings, will have the task of outlining the programme of action for the phase following the consolidation period, including clear benchmarks and a time-table for the high-priority issue of the return of refugees and displaced persons to minority areas. The European Union fully supports the High Representative in the discharge of his difficult duties. His action, as well as the assistance of the international community as a whole, remains indispensable for the foreseeable future. Our ultimate goal, however, is a Bosnia and Herzegovina capable at last of governing itself through impartial administration. We remain committed to a sovereign, united and independent Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A clear sign of this commitment was the adoption on 8 June 1998 of a declaration on the place of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Europe and the creation of a joint European Union/Bosnia and Herzegovina Consultative Task Force, which is designed to assist the country to identify and overcome some of the technical obstacles to closer ties with the European Union. As a first step, the Consultative Task Force at its latest meeting made recommendations in order to improve the legal and economic conditions for direct foreign investments in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As the largest donor to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Union supports the efforts towards lasting peace, reconciliation and stability, having contributed close to one billion ECUs for reconstruction and technical assistance and another billion ECUs for humanitarian aid. We will continue our support for reconstruction, the reintegration of refugees and reconciliation in the future. Ultimately, however, the future of Bosnia and Herzegovina depends on its politicians accepting their responsibility for their country and the development of active and effective political and economic cooperation between the central State and the two entities. Good governance and the principles of transparency and fairness must become common practice throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina. Only then will we have achieved the noble goals set out in the Peace Agreement.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.55.

Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I apologize to all of you for having been a little bit tardy. We are working with several countries on trying to reach consensus on the draft resolution before us. I think you may understand that it is in our interest to see if we can, in fact, bring about that consensus and, over the next few minutes — or hour or two — of proceedings, we hope to bring some good news to you.

Before us, awaiting adoption by the General Assembly, is draft resolution A/53/L.55, entitled "The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina". This draft resolution is sponsored by the spectrum of the membership of the General Assembly, including Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Liechtenstein, Malaysia, Morocco, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Slovenia, Turkey, the United States of America and the Republic of Macedonia. We hope to have some others added to this list.

The sponsors have committed themselves to the furtherance of the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region as a whole. In particular, the draft resolution supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and places particular emphasis on the following as indispensable to peace, to the return to normalcy, to stability and to reconciliation.

First, while 1998 was designated the year of return, the actual return of refugees has not met expectation, especially where displaced persons and refugees would be of a minority ethnic group or where they were going back to the area from which they may have been ethnically cleansed. In this context, operative paragraph 10 stresses the conditionality of international assistance with respect to municipalities, locales and entities fully supporting the principles and practical efforts for displaced person and refugee return. This is in line with the so-called Open City project established to promote the focus of rebuilding and economic revitalization programmes on those locales exhibiting a sincere commitment to return. Without refugees and displaced persons going back to their homes, the whole peace process would be seen as a mirage and would evaporate away.

Second, critical to return, but also significant to the process of reconciliation, justice and the solidification of peace, is support for the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and full compliance with its orders. All States Members of the United Nations should be committed to the work of the Tribunal, in particular by adopting complementing legislation and providing material resources. However, by far the greatest challenge to the Tribunal comes from the non-cooperation of certain States and parties. Compliance is mandatory and not optional. Here, we have followed the assessment, demands and even terminology of the report delivered to this General Assembly by the President of the Tribunal, Judge McDonald. While there has been some progress, the Tribunal's report emphasizes that non-cooperation continues to come overwhelmingly from the same States and parties as before, while others continue to be in substantive compliance. Again, here the draft resolution stresses conditionality and Chapter VII means, including the authority of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) and the potential of other sanctions, in order to compel compliance.

Third, the work of United Nations related forces, as well as of SFOR, has been crucial. SFOR is increasingly assisting civilian aspects of the implementation of the peace accords and the United Nations-mandated agencies are playing an even greater and more decisive role. We must continue to support the work of the International Police Task Force and the judicial reform process, especially where the local authorities may be resistant to or not reflect the commitment to pluralism.

Fourth, progress has been significant in some areas, including in such diverse fields as uniform licence plates and economic rehabilitation. However, all, and in particular we Bosnians, must recognize the need for further reform in order to capture the full opportunities of peace and further energize the process of return. Similarly, all discriminatory property laws and privatization efforts that were enacted to force ethnic cleansing or maintain the consequences thereof must be reversed and certainly will not be recognized as legal.

Fifth, many have come to Bosnia's aid and I must thank those who, yesterday, assisted Bosnia and Herzegovina politically, militarily and in humanitarian terms, through the collective and individual right of self-defence, to overcome aggression and genocide. Their efforts and friendship are not forgotten. The emphasis today is on the effort of rebuilding and consolidating the peace. Here, we thank many contributors, from United Nations-related agencies to the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and such bilateral donors and programmes as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). A new structural dimension has been introduced by the most promising cooperative relationship between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the European Union. This gives all our citizens an integrating vision of peace, development and our place in the European Union family of nations.

Sixth, there are several other promising bilateral and multilateral arrangements, from mine clearance to commerce. The special relationship and transit rights arrangements between the Republic of Croatia, on the one hand, and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the other, establish a positive precedent. On the other hand, we must continue to express our dismay at the failure of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to establish diplomatic relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina without precondition and to abandon other arrangements inconsistent with the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Seventh, the long-delayed process of resolving the succession rights of the old Yugoslavia, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, must move ahead, as has been frequently reiterated, on the basis of the equal rights of all the successor States, rather than of the dominance of one. Here, we must openly ask the question: Why has the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the new Yugoslavia, not applied for admission to this body or other relevant international bodies? In fact, I am quite certain that we in Bosnia would be prepared to support their endeavours in this area.

Eighth, within the region, as well as within Bosnia and Herzegovina, the overwhelming importance of democratization and respect for human, national and minority rights must continue to be furthered. This goes hand in hand with local efforts, including those at reconciliation. I should mention here the special visit of the Inter-Religious Council, representing the religious leaders of the four major religious groups in Bosnia, who had a chance to be here at the United Nations and to be greeted by the Secretary-General and by many members of the General Assembly.

Ninth, this year's draft resolution does include a new provision — I must add, an overdue request — in order to bring the fall of the United Nations-designated safe area of Srebrenica and the consequential human tragedy to closure. The Secretary-General has been asked

to issue a comprehensive report on the matter. Neither the process of reconciliation, nor the return to normalcy within Bosnia and Herzegovina, nor the striving for the United Nations own sense of accountability can be effective without this most necessary exercise.

Operative paragraph 18 does not seek out the criminally culpable. That is left to the Tribunal. It does not seek to challenge the Security Council or to promote a confrontational attitude. We believe that the Secretary-General can provide information, analysis and conclusions, with a sense of accountability which builds upon — that is, goes beyond — the fragmented reports offered during the time-frame in question. This will be not a regurgitation, but a re-evaluation, a new effort at facts and conclusions, with the benefit of hindsight.

We have already approached the Secretariat about building a positive understanding of this request. We welcome all cosponsors and supporters of this draft resolution to continue to engage in a constructive evaluation with the Secretariat on the subject matter of this provision. Srebrenica is the criminal responsibility of the perpetrators. Srebrenica is the nightmare of the mothers, sisters and daughters that survived so many male victims. Srebrenica is our common shame. With accountability, maybe we also can make Srebrenica one of those lessons from which all of us will walk away with a greater understanding, as well as a sense of moral redemption.

We continue to express our realistic hope for the promise of peace and our confidence in the efforts of the Office of the High Representative, SFOR and many United Nations-related agencies, as well as many others who are committed to Bosnia and Herzegovina's future. We also look forward to the Peace Implementation Conference this December in Madrid and believe that this draft resolution will contribute to its work. I thank them, in Bosnia, and all present here for their support, and in particular today for support for the draft resolution before the Assembly.

Mr. Selim (Bangladesh): Bangladesh considers the deliberations on agenda item 41, "The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina", an opportunity to express once again our support for the struggle to preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a civic, multi-ethnic and multicultural State. Bangladesh, as a peace-loving country, is strongly committed to the promotion and strengthening of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I am confident that our consideration today will help assess the progress so far achieved in the implementation of the Peace Agreement and thereby encourage and call upon the concerned parties to honour the international community's commitment to peace and progress in the region.

It is unfortunate that the pace of implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement has been slow. It is a matter of particular concern to Bangladesh that despite repeated efforts by the international community and the Bosnian Government, refugees and displaced persons continue to face harassment and obstructions in returning to their homes and localities. As a result, returns have become slower. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had set a target of 50,000 minority returns for the first half of 1998. The actual figure of returns is about 15,000. Violations of human rights continue to scare minorities out of their homes. Incidents of destruction of property and violence directed at minority residents increased during the last year. We must not overlook the fact that without addressing the question of the return of the displaced and minority population, the achievement of a long-term political solution to the Bosnian problem is not possible. In this regard, we believe that the restoration of mutual trust among the concerned parties is vital. We urge all to engage in productive interaction so that concrete results can be achieved.

As we discuss the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, another development in the region must not escape our attention. Developments in the region, particularly the situation in Kosovo, have a direct impact on the peace implementation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We understand that some 10,000 people from Kosovo have taken refuge in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These people are sharing the meagre resources of the country, causing further hardship to the already suffering people of Bosnia.

Bangladesh attaches particular importance to the role of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in bringing justice to the region. We are disappointed, however, to see that war criminals continue to remain free, in contravention of the Peace Agreement. The Tribunal represents and upholds the principle of the rule of law. However, it cannot function without the cooperation and compliance of States.

It is encouraging that some parties are cooperating with the Tribunal within the terms of the Dayton Agreement. However, we are disappointed to note that others have continued to flout the call of the Tribunal and

that of the Security Council, and have failed to execute arrest warrants of indicted persons and to transfer the indicted persons to the custody of the Tribunal. Their intransigent behaviour reached such a level that they did not even hesitate to refuse to accept a team of investigators of the Tribunal.

It is a matter of real concern that the international community has done little to address the problem, despite continuous violations of international humanitarian laws and the rulings of the Tribunal. This eventually encourages the offender to deliberately ignore its international obligations. In this regard, we call upon all the parties concerned to respect their international obligations, in particular those under the Dayton Agreement, and to cooperate with the Tribunal in apprehending the indicted criminals.

Bangladesh has remained steadfast in its support of the just struggle of the Bosnians in the face of the most vicious aggression against their people, territory and, above all, dignity. We have provided whatever military support we could offer within the framework of the United Nations peacekeeping mechanism. Bangladesh has repeatedly declared its policy to remain unflinchingly committed to every move to enhance the capacity of the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina to build a unified State structure and to deliver on the promise to construct a multi-ethnic and democratic polity. While we reiterate our commitment to contribute in our humble way to the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina, we would call upon others to intensify collective measures in support of the reconstruction and rehabilitation process.

We are confident that this Assembly can contribute effectively to the upholding of the territorial integrity, legal continuity and sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are also confident that our collective support for the implementation of the provisions of the Dayton Peace Agreement, particularly for ensuring the return of minorities and displaced people, and also compliance by the parties concerned with the Tribunal's rulings, will contribute to the resolution of the problem. The commitment of the international community needs to be forcefully pronounced. The draft resolution before us represents the minimum the international community must accomplish in this regard. Bangladesh is a sponsor of this draft resolution. We hope that it will be adopted with the broadest possible support.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia): The international community has made a long-term commitment to peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Malaysian Government is gratified to note that almost three years after the signing of the 1995 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, substantial progress has indeed been achieved. Important efforts towards building a unified, multi-ethnic, multicultural and multireligious Bosnia and Herzegovina, within its internationally recognized boundaries, have indeed taken root. A number of fundamental common institutions have been constituted and begun to function, albeit with certain degrees of structural and political constraint.

Despite these achievements, much more still needs to be done to resolve the remaining critical problems and ensure that peace and stability will endure in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The return of refugees and displaced persons, reconciliation among various ethnic groups, minority protection and economic recovery, are among the main outstanding problems that have to be urgently and comprehensively addressed in order to facilitate the establishment of viable statehood for Bosnia and Herzegovina. My delegation therefore believes that the continuing and active involvement of the international community remains essential. In this regard, my delegation commends the important role of the international community, in particular that of the High Representative and his Office, the relevant Governments, the Stabilization Force (SFOR), the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), the International Police Task Force (IPTF) and various other United Nations agencies whose contributions have been very instrumental in facilitating the full implementation of the Peace Agreement.

At the same time, we hope that all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to recognize that the main responsibility for achieving peace and national reconciliation remains with the Bosnian leaders and the Bosnian people themselves. There is no alternative but for them to remain fully committed to the Peace Agreement. They must continue to work strenuously towards establishing an integrated, independent, and peaceful Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on mutual respect for all, regardless of ethnicity, religion and culture.

We commend the Bosnians and the international community for the successful holding of national elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina recently. That the elections were held in a free and fair manner is a strong tribute to the international community, which remains committed to promoting peace and reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to the Bosnians themselves,

who are keen to put aside their differences and work towards building a united, independent and multi-ethnic, multicultural and multireligious Bosnia. We hope that the elected leaders will maintain their commitment to strengthening the political, economic and social foundations of the country.

Malaysia attaches special importance to the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. We are seriously concerned that despite the efforts of the international community, the major indicted war criminals still remain at large. We hope that more serious efforts will be made, especially in regard to getting the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to surrender without delay those criminals that are taking refuge in its territory.

The safe return of refugees and displaced persons is another prerequisite for lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are happy to note that there has been some progress in the efforts, particularly by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to speed up the process. Malaysia will support all necessary measures to ensure an early completion of the voluntary and organized process of refugee return to all parts of the country.

Malaysia is proud to have been associated with the efforts to rebuild peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We will continue to be actively and persistently engaged in ensuring the full implementation of the Peace Agreement. In order to contribute to the national reconciliation efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malaysia successfully organized a non-governmental forum in Kuala Lumpur from 23 to 26 August 1998. The objective was to expose participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the valuable experiences in national reconciliation of other countries. Fifteen Bosnian participants attended. They found the forum very useful in providing ideas for bringing about a climate of trust and tolerance among Bosnians. The Kuala Lumpur forum was the first of what we had hoped would be a series of forums on this subject matter to be held in cooperation with other organizations, governmental and non-governmental. Malaysia would like to express its appreciation for the contributions made by other countries, in particular Canada, which provided the necessary funding that helped ensure the success of this forum.

Malaysia has in the past contributed to the reconstruction efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Regrettably, our contribution has had to be reduced due to the financial crisis and financial problems faced by Malaysia at present. Nevertheless, Malaysia will continue to work closely with the others to continue to provide, within our means, further assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Šimonović (Croatia): Another year has passed, and the agenda item "The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina" is once again being discussed in the plenary of the General Assembly. Once again we contemplate the year's successes and setbacks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Every year there are fewer speakers on the list and fewer people are present. Interest in these events seems to fade little by little, and I ask myself whether this is a good or a bad sign. Is it a sign that the situation is improving, or that the international community is losing interest? On the eve of yet another Peace Implementation Conference, this time in Madrid, we should ask ourselves whether or not we are on track for helping Bosnia and Herzegovina become a self-sustaining State.

Despite some positive trends in the return process and the restructuring of the police and other joint institutions, many areas of social and economic life are stagnating. Little economic opportunity is being created, and foreign assistance remains focused on humanitarian aid. Less than 30 per cent of pre-war industry is operating, while the privatization process requires impetus. There is a serious concern that if no progress is made in achieving sustainable development, the annual bill for Bosnia and Herzegovina, which includes $1.5 billion for humanitarian aid and expenses for 30,000 troops and numerous international personnel, may become too much of a burden for donor and troop-contributing countries. Given that without progress international interest in continuing to provide assistance to Bosnia may eventually diminish, not addressing these problems now could have disastrous effects on Bosnia and Herzegovina in the future.

As a co-signatory and guarantor of the Dayton Peace Agreement, and as one of the two neighbours of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the other being the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Croatia continues to follow closely the development of events. Upholding close relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina is vitally important for Croatia. The interrelation between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina includes geostrategic, communicational, economic, cultural and many other links between our two countries. As the strengthening of the two-way exchange can only benefit both, Croatia is very interested in fostering prosperity and sustainable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is with this in mind that a

week ago Croatia signed two far-reaching Agreements: on the establishment of special relations with the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and on transit to and from Ploče and Neum with Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The importance of the Agreement on Special Relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is that it establishes the legal framework for cooperation between the executive, legislative and other Government institutions and non-governmental organizations in Croatia and the Federation at the entity level, in line with the Constitutions of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Agreement provides scope for wide cooperation, from the economic, scientific and social fields to the development of local self-government, questions on property rights, policing and defence, all of which are to be further elaborated in the respective annexes to the Agreement. Croatia is convinced that the Agreement will go a long way not only towards guaranteeing transparent aid from Croatia to the Federation and to Croats in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also in benefiting the overall welfare of Bosnia and Herzegovina and all its peoples.

The Agreement on Free Transit through the territory of Croatia to and from the port of Ploče and through the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Neum gives Bosnia and Herzegovina free and unimpeded access to the sea at Ploče, as well as ensuring free and unimpeded transit for Croatia through the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina near the Bosnian town of Neum. Croatia will also establish a free and foreign trade zone that will be made available for use by Bosnia and Herzegovina in the near future. The implementation and regulation of the Agreements will be the responsibility of the newly established Croatian-Bosnian Interstate Council for Cooperation, which will also be tasked with making recommendations to both Croatian and Federation institutions.

Croatia has consistently affirmed its support for the Dayton Peace Agreement and its three fundamental pillars: Bosnia and Herzegovina as a single internationally recognized State, which is decentralized, and which ensures the equality of its three constituent nations and the respect and protection of human rights for all its citizens. Croatia believes that it is only by upholding and strengthening all these principles that Bosnia and Herzegovina will be viable and that the peace process in Bosnia will continue to gain momentum. Abrogation of either the letter or spirit of Dayton is unacceptable, and can serve only to weaken the overall peace process.

Despite some positive developments over recent months, it is our opinion that the plight of Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina still does not receive due consideration. Croatia supports the views of the international community that the return of minority groups in both entities of Bosnia is crucial to post-war reconciliation and rebuilding. Unfortunately, it is proceeding slowly, and in many cases not at all. The international community often makes the point — it was made most recently by both the High Representative and the Deputy High Representative in Bosnia — that the key to the reintegration of Bosnia and Herzegovina into a multi-ethnic State lies with the return of Croats to central Bosnia and Posavina. While my Government undeniably upholds this view, concrete support from the international community to Bosnian Croats remains insufficient.

For their part, Bosnian Croats, as the least numerous constituent nation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, look to Dayton and the joint institutions it created as a means of guaranteeing their place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Croatia is concerned by increasing feelings of alienation among Bosnian Croats and upholds the position that the Bosnian legislature must protect the equality of its three constituent nations, in conformity with its constitution. Such protection should be reflected in the electoral law and the support of national cultural institutions.

Let me reiterate Croatia's support for the efforts of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to bring to justice all those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Croatia reiterates its view that cooperation with the Tribunal must be unconditional, and in this respect supports the recent decision of the Security Council to demand that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia execute arrest warrants and surrender persons indicted by the Tribunal. Although the Republika Srpska entity has displayed its first signs of cooperation, major perpetrators of war crimes, namely Karadzic and Mladic, are still at large. The Republika Srpska is also harbouring Milan Martic, a high-ranking perpetrator of war crimes in Croatia. I should like to point out once again that even though they were the primary targets of war crimes, Croats and Muslims still make up the majority of persons in the custody of the Tribunal. Moreover, despite ample evidence and repeated calls by my Government, the Tribunal has still not brought a single indictment against persons responsible for crimes targeted against Bosnian Croats. Unless efficient action is taken with regard to the events that I

have mentioned, the objective dispensing of justice and a truthful historical account of events cannot be achieved.

In closing, I should like to remind the Assembly that although relations have improved between the States that emerged from the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the unresolved issue of succession continues to undermine prospects for the full and lasting normalization of relations in South-East Europe. In spite of the clear conclusions of the European Union and the United Nations International Conference on the former Yugoslavia, as well as the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia still refuses to accept the generally recognized fact that following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, no single State can be considered to be its continuation or sole successor. Croatia believes that additional efforts, including by the United Nations, are necessary in order to bring the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the consensus reached by the other successor States.

Mr. Erdös (Hungary) (*interpretation from French*): Hungary associates itself with the statement made earlier by the Ambassador of Austria on behalf of the European Union.

We are pleased by the positive and sometimes spectacular results obtained in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the framework of the peace process. At the same time, Hungary believes that the achievements of that process are not yet sufficient to enable us to regard this wide-ranging international undertaking as concluded. Indeed, significant objectives have yet to be achieved, including in the area of the return of refugees and displaced persons. In several days' time the Peace Implementation Council will hold its annual meeting and set new short-term and long-term priorities for international activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The return of refugees, the arrest of war criminals who are still at large and cooperation with the Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, as well as the economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, will undoubtedly continue to receive special attention.

Multifaceted international assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina remains indispensable. Given the tragic events that took place in that country, we cannot be discouraged in the face of the many kinds of setbacks and difficulties that arise in the process of national reconstruction. We believe that it is necessary to seek tirelessly the modalities and initiatives that will make this unprecedented international cooperation more effective. To resign ourselves to the problems can only play into the hands of the enemies of reconciliation who are still among us, who have not given up their previous designs and who draw strength from the reflexes and instincts of aggressive nationalism or rely on selfish interests. That being said, it will now be necessary to focus further on the creation of an economy that in the near future will be able to do without such foreign assistance and will be able to ensure the sustainable development of the country.

Reconciliation and democratic coexistence are not a given. What is absolutely vital in this respect is the cooperation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, of its two entities and of the three ethnic communities among themselves and with the concert of nations. Only in this way can the contribution of the international community be meaningful and play its proper role. One of the fundamental pillars of reconciliation remains the arrest and sentencing of war criminals. In this context, it is impossible to ignore the serious failings regarding cooperation with the Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. This question was at the heart of the debate a few days ago in this very Hall, and the draft resolution submitted under this agenda item refers to it forcefully enough and explicitly indicates those responsible for these failings.

Behind the resolutions, decisions and other documents we adopt in the United Nations, above and beyond the texts that we so painstakingly draft, there are realities of our contemporary world that are sometimes extremely harsh and cruel. In connection with Srebrenica, a subject mentioned in the draft resolution before us, allow me to recall a visit that I made to that city as a member of a Security Council delegation towards the end of April 1993.

Srebrenica, its population swollen to many times its previous size as a result of successive waves of refugees, was at that time already surrounded and under seige. The delegation went there a few days after the Security Council's adoption of resolution 819 (1993) — by which, as the Assembly will recall, Srebrenica had been declared a safe area — in order to show solidarity with the city and to highlight how very attentively the international community was following events relating to Srebrenica. We entered the city in armoured troop transport vehicles, painted white, the colour of the United Nations Protection Force. Wearing bullet-proof vests and blue helmets, my colleagues and I saw, not without emotion, hundreds of people lining our route and applauding the sight of an international convoy, a symbol in their eyes of protection and liberation.

Seeing all that from one of those vehicles, I remembered newsclips that I had seen in the movies about the arrival in 1944-1945 of allied tanks and troops in towns and villages that had been liberated from Nazi occupation and the enthusiastic welcome of the crowds. And I remember that all of a sudden I was overwhelmed by the painful realization that we were not liberators and that we did not have the means to dispel the concerns and end the anguish of a population that was threatened from all sides, deprived of all the conditions of a normal life.

At that time I could of course understand the political and psychological importance of the United Nations presence in Srebrenica, but not yet knowing what would follow, I hesitated to form an opinion about the future that awaited those people, about the future that awaited that charming little city tucked away in the mountains on that spring day, when everything radiated peace, tranquillity and the rebirth of nature. This was in the month of April 1993. The contrast between the natural beauty of the place and the tanks, guns and helmets that bore no relation to that ideal environment was astounding, shocking and hardly believable.

Today, I know how the story ended. We know the end of the story which was also the end of the lives of thousands of people whom we, United Nations envoys, had seen, with whom we had spoken and who had welcomed us — alas, mistakenly — as liberators. The history of the United Nations safe areas and what happened to Bosnia and its besieged cities compels us to attach particular importance to the provision of the draft resolution concerning a complete report on events in Srebrenica, to efforts to shed light on what occurred in that Bosnian city and, of course, to the drawing of the necessary conclusions.

Hungary has joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.55, and we hope to see it adopted by the Assembly without a vote. As a bordering State, Hungary is vitally interested in seeing stability return to Bosnia and Herzegovina, its economic development ensured and the theories and practices of intolerance, which have caused such material and psychological destruction, vanquished and replaced by coexistence and harmonious cooperation among all the citizens of that country, in a democratic framework, with shared functioning institutions and with full equality of rights without regard to ethnic, religious or linguistic origins.

Mr. Effendi (Indonesia): It has been almost three years since the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina was signed by the parties concerned. We are gratified to note that during this period the ceasefire has been maintained and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina have to a certain degree resumed their normal lives. We are encouraged by the progress made in the implementation of certain provisions of the Peace Agreement, and we therefore look forward to the full implementation of the results achieved in the general election held throughout the country on 12 and 13 September 1998. Indonesia is also encouraged by the conclusions reached at the Ministerial Meeting of the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council held in Luxembourg on 9 June 1998, and looks forward to their full implementation.

Like the rest of the international community, however, we are still very concerned about the pace of and inconsistencies in the implementation of the Agreement, in particular key provisions which have never been fully implemented. Notable are those relating to the arrest and prosecution of indicted war criminals and to the establishment of conditions conducive to the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes, as well as of those essential for freedom of movement.

There is no doubt that the establishment of a lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina depends on the effective functioning of the common State structures, reform of the civilian police and the continuation of efforts to strengthen the judicial system and of endeavours to enhance reconciliation and mutual respect among that State's multi-ethnic society. These factors are of critical importance to bolster the economic revitalization and reconstruction that can lead to the successful consolidation of the peace process.

It is therefore imperative in our view for the international community to reaffirm its full support for the Government and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in particular in their struggle to establish a just and stable State in durable peace, where the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country are fully preserved. Member States, through the General Assembly, should reiterate their commitment to the establishment of such a peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and for that matter in the whole Balkan region.

To underscore Indonesia's solidarity with the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia has joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/53/L.55 and hopes that it will be adopted by consensus.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina in connection with draft resolution A/53/L.55.

Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina): My statement should, I think, make things much simpler. We are, I believe, at the threshold of consensus on draft resolution A/53/L.55, and I wish to announce three oral revisions to the text of that draft resolution.

First, the eleventh preambular paragraph should be deleted and the following text should be inserted at the end of the following paragraph:

> "and welcoming the efforts of the High Representative and the Commander of the Stabilization Force in implementing the provisions of the Peace Agreement,".

Secondly, in operative paragraph 18, the text "including an assessment" should be inserted, within commas, after the words "a comprehensive report".

Finally, also in paragraph 18, the text "which was followed by the establishment of other safe areas" should be inserted, within commas, after the words "the establishment of the safe area of Srebrenica on 16 April 1993".

I hope that these revisions will make our work easier.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): Three years after the Dayton Agreement was signed, it is clear that it was a worthy effort. It is good to see Bosnia and Herzegovina slowly but steadily recovering from a long period of devastating war. Since Dayton, the peoples of that multi-ethnic country have gained a real opportunity for eventual reconciliation and for the establishment of a new civil society based on democratic principles. It is quite remarkable that at present the situation in Bosnia is gradually being shifted to the category of problems which basically require increased post-conflict peace-building rather than peace enforcement.

At the same time, our optimism about the developments in Bosnia is mixed with some caution. Notwithstanding substantial progress in the parties' implementation of the Dayton Agreement, certain obstacles to the establishment of a durable peace in the country are still to be removed. It is sad but true that international pressure on the parties remains one of the major decisive factors in promoting the peace process. In this regard, it should be emphasized that it is the people and the local authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina who bear primary responsibility for the future of their country. Therefore, in our view, they have no option but to uphold further the Dayton Agreement and to refrain from any action that could jeopardize the positive achievements in hand.

In the course of the past year we have witnessed a number of important developments in the framework of the consolidation process in Bosnia. I wish to cite but a few, namely, the introduction of a new flag, passports, common licence plates and a common currency, the opening of Tuzla International Airport et cetera. Among the major events that contributed to the process at the international level we should mention the fourth international donors conference, held last May in Brussels, and the adoption by the United Nations Security Council of resolutions 1168 (1998), 1174 (1998) and 1184 (1998).

The 1998 general elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which were supervised by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), constitute an important step in the development of a political life in the country. We note with satisfaction that they were carried out in full compliance with international democratic standards and in an atmosphere free of violence and intimidation.

In keeping with its contribution to the process, Ukraine has perceived all these developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina positively. As a member of the Peace Implementation Council, Ukraine welcomed the adoption of the Luxembourg Declaration at the Ministerial Meeting of the Council's Steering Board last June and fully endorsed its provisions.

As is widely recognized, a continued military presence of the international force in Bosnia and Herzegovina has largely ensured that many military tasks required by annex 1-A of the Dayton Agreement have been fulfilled. However, it is also generally admitted that the influence of the international Stabilization Force (SFOR) remains a key element in ensuring further progress in the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement. Mindful of that, and as a troop contributor to the NATO-led operation of SFOR, Ukraine welcomed the decision of the alliance to maintain the Force in the area beyond June 1998 and also welcomed the authorization by the United Nations Security Council, through its resolution 1174 (1998), of the extension of the SFOR mandate for an additional 12 months.

Ukraine commends the combined efforts undertaken by all the international players involved to make the peace process in Bosnia irreversible. We note with satisfaction the increased coordination of these efforts with those of the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH). We feel that this trend should be further enhanced.

Taking into account that at the current stage further progress in establishing a sustainable peace in Bosnia largely depends on the implementation of the civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement, Ukraine maintains that UNMIBH and the bodies of the United Nations family continue to play an increasingly crucial role.

This relates first and foremost to the activities the International Police Task Force (IPTF). It is worth noting that, with the evolution of the peace process, the mandate of the IPTF has also evolved, in essence from one of simple monitoring and ensuring that the local police acted in a professional way to one of restructuring, training and guiding the local police. Therefore, Ukraine, as an initial and current contributor to the IPTF, supported Security Council resolution 1168 (1998), which authorized an increase in the strength of the IPTF as well as its more active involvement in the training of local law enforcement personnel in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

With the Security Council's authorization in resolution 1184 (1998) for UNMIBH to monitor and assess the court system in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a part of an overall programme of legal reform in the country, in addition to its previous mandate to investigate human rights abuses committed by the local police, the activities of the United Nations Mission have become more significant than ever before. We are of the view that the two other tasks of UNMIBH that complement its police reform mandate are of paramount importance, since it is protection of human rights and fair courts that are real indicators of a democratic society with a multi-ethnic population.

Our delegation also thinks that at the level of State-building measures backed by the international community, a project of establishing joint border guards in Bosnia to secure the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country would be quite promising.

The activities of the United Nations system in providing assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina related to the return of refugees and displaced persons, economic reconstruction, demining and respect for human rights produce the necessary results, and they deserve the appreciation of the international community. In this context, we especially note the successful efforts of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in facilitating the return of minority groups in the framework of the "open cities" project. We also noted as a positive fact that since last June the demining activities under United Nations supervision were handed over to the Government of Bosnia and that the national mine action programme, which is financed through the United Nations Development Programme, was established.

It is evident that the complete consolidation of Bosnia and Herzegovina can be achieved along with the economic reconstruction of the whole country. Ukraine welcomes the diversified economic programmes financed and carried out in Bosnia by the World Bank and the international donor community at large and stands ready to get involved in them.

Ukraine also intends to expand its economic cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina on a bilateral basis. Unfortunately, a long period of absence of peace in Bosnia did not favour such cooperation. That cooperation was further seriously hampered by the adverse consequences of the sanctions regime, which caused suffering to Ukraine as it did to all other countries of the Danube region. Given the current situation in the region, as well as the mutual interest of Ukraine and Bosnia in promoting bilateral economic cooperation, the firm intention to realize those perspectives were reconfirmed at the most recent meeting between the heads of Government of our two States during the summit of the Central European Initiative held in Zagreb 10 days ago.

The Peace Implementation Conference held in December 1997 in Bonn provided a good basis for the parties to the Dayton Agreement to move the peace process forward and brought positive results. We are very hopeful that the forthcoming Ministerial Meeting of the Peace Implementation Council, which is to be held in Madrid from 15 to 16 December this year and in which Ukraine will also take part, will provide further impetus in helping Bosnia and Herzegovina to proceed with building a consolidated, democratic, peaceful and prosperous society. Let us continue to take it as our common responsibility. My delegation believes that the adoption of the draft resolution before us today by consensus would be very instrumental to that end.

Prince Al-Hussein (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express my delegation's appreciation for the successful efforts of the President in guiding the work of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly.

For the last few years now, Bosnia and Herzegovina has enjoyed an absence of bloodshed. As a result, certain positive developments have taken place: the introduction of a new flag, common vehicle licence plates and a common currency, the mutual recognition by all successor States to the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the successful conduct of municipal and general elections in 1997 and in 1998. The authors and sponsors of the draft resolution before the Assembly have taken note of this and welcomed the efforts of the States and parties concerned and those of other international actors that have played a role in bringing about a very difficult transformation from war to peace.

Unfortunately, however, it has been a transformation from a bitter war to a bitter peace. The task of establishing common federal institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still proving to be very difficult. There are still many who simply do not recognize the legitimacy of any institution or any initiative that confirms the unitary nature of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Furthermore, the Dayton Agreement will never lead to real peace until its very essence — namely, annex 7 — is implemented in its entirety and those refugees and displaced persons from minority areas return to their original regions. We join others in urging all the parties to implement annex 7 in full and in good faith. In this context, we also support the addition of operative paragraph 22 to the draft resolution.

To facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons to their regions of origin, we join in the appeal to all the parties to cooperate with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 827 (1993), 1022 (1995) and 1207 (1998). My delegation has taken careful account of the Tribunal's fifth annual report and would like to express its deep concern at the continued refusal by one of the major actors in the region to cooperate with the Tribunal. Those accused of war crimes must appear before the Tribunal in The Hague to answer the charges levelled against them. Their appalling crimes cannot under any circumstances be forgotten or forgiven by the international community.

In this context, in July 1995 some 8,000 Bosnian men from Srebrenica were separated from their families by the Bosnian Serb military and subsequently disappeared. It is now widely suspected that they were executed by their captors. My delegation very much regrets that the United Nations has never conducted an inquiry into exactly how the United Nations safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa collapsed, and it especially regrets that there is no comprehensive United Nations account of the episode against which various disturbing media allegations or revelations about United Nations conduct could be evaluated. We therefore very much endorse the inclusion in this year's draft resolution of operative paragraph 18.

From early on in the war, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has hosted refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and sent peacekeepers to Bosnia, first with the United Nations Protection Force and later with the Stabilization Force and the International Police Task Force. Jordan remains wholly committed to an independent, unitary and multi-ethnic Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Islam (Pakistan): Almost three years ago, the Dayton Peace Agreement was concluded to bring an end to one of the most brutal conflicts of our times. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrated enormous courage and determination in seeking a peaceful solution of the conflict by abandoning the course of violence, destruction and war. They deserve commendation for choosing the path of reconciliation, harmony and amity. They faced a journey full of obstacles, considering the deep scars which were left in the minds of the aggrieved community.

Since the signing of the Dayton peace accords, considerable strides have been made towards resurrecting the unity and territorial integrity of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. But a great deal remains to be done to ensure the full and impartial implementation of the peace accords. It is an arduous task, considering the deep fissures that four years of fratricidal war created in their society.

A faithful implementation of the Dayton Accords is central to any durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a united, sovereign and independent State. We note with appreciation the unequivocal fulfilment of obligations by the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unfortunately, the Serbian entity

demonstrated a lack of commitment, seriously hampering international efforts.

We are particularly concerned at the lack of progress in a number of areas, including the return of the refugees and displaced persons as well as freedom of movement across the inter-entity boundary lines. The refugees and displaced persons continue to face obstructions, which discourages them from returning to their homes. The rehabilitation of the refugees is vital to ensure the full revival of the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina within its internationally recognized borders. All parties, particularly the Serbian entity, must create the conditions necessary to facilitate their return in conditions of security and honour.

The cooperation in apprehending the perpetrators of genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not satisfactory. The solemn commitment made at Dayton to ensure the appropriate criminal proceedings against the war criminals is not being fulfilled by the Serbian entity and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It must be complied with. It is unfortunate that most of the indictees at large remain free on the territory of the Republika Srpska and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which continues to ignore relevant obligations under international law, particularly by refusing to arrest and surrender indicted criminals. This is a blatant violation of international law which must not be allowed.

We deplore the fact that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has taken shelter behind domestic laws to justify its failure to abide by binding obligations under international law. The international community must ensure full and timely implementation of all aspects of the arrangements agreed by the parties. Security Council resolution 1207 (1998) of 17 November 1998, while condemning the Belgrade authorities' failure to hand over indicted criminals, called upon them to take the necessary measures under their domestic law to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Statute of the Tribunal. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia must respond to the demands of the international community.

The United Nations-declared safe area, Srebrenica, witnessed some of the worst massacres by the Serbs from April 1993 to December 1995. Despite widespread concerns expressed over the reports of the heinous crimes committed in Srebrenica, no serious efforts have been made to unmask the truth. We expect the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report along with an assessment of events in Srebrenica with a view to establishing the facts and to bringing the perpetrators of crimes to justice. The findings of the Secretary-General would be a lesson for the international community with respect to preventing any recurrence of such events anywhere in the world. The Member States and the concerned agencies and organizations must provide all relevant information for the preparation of the report by the Secretary-General.

The revival of Bosnia's economic and social structure, destroyed by years of war, needs the priority attention and sustained commitment of the international community. There should be a comprehensive approach to the economic reform that would contribute to more homogeneous development of economy and trade in the two entities and across the inter-entity boundary line. We welcome the international support for establishing an economic programme with adequate emphasis on private sector development, improvement of foreign investment conditions, restructuring of banking and reform of the financial system. However, it is important that the disbursement of international economic assistance to various parties is linked to their compliance with the Dayton Agreement, in particular to their commitment to the integrity and the unity of the country, to full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and to the return of refugees and displaced persons.

Pakistan has extended substantial financial, technical and material support to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a token of our political solidarity with the people of that country. We have so far contributed $1 million for the International Tribunal. We urge all Member States and organizations to generously contribute to the voluntary fund of the Tribunal in order to enable it to carry out its functions and responsibilities effectively and efficiently. The perpetrators of mass killings must not go unpunished, be they in Bosnia or in Kashmir.

Pakistan has consistently adopted a principled position throughout the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina and has extended unqualified moral and political support to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our support is reflective of our conviction that no nation should be victimized because of its smaller size and that no people should be brutalized because of its origin. We also believe that no nation and no people should be denied their inherent right to self-determination and their right to wage a legitimate struggle for freedom.

We are confident that the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina will have the resilience and strength to overcome the formidable problems faced by their country. The international community must also leave no

stone unturned in ensuring the realization of the dream of a sovereign, united, multi-ethnic, multicultural State of Bosnia and Herzegovina, at peace with itself and contributing to international peace and prosperity.

The draft resolution before the Assembly today embodies the principles and goals that must be accomplished if there is to be a just and lasting peace settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Pakistan is a sponsor of this draft resolution and earnestly hopes that all Member States will support its adoption without a vote.

Mr. Galuška (Czech Republic): At the outset, I wish to voice my country's support for the statement delivered by Austria on behalf of the European Union and associated countries. As the Czech Republic continues to stress the need for stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina and has been actively working for its achievement, I would like to address those aspects of this issue that my country considers of particular importance.

The results of the efforts to stabilize peaceful development in Bosnia and Herzegovina confirm that we are facing a long, arduous and complicated process. There are areas where there has been relatively rapid progress towards the achievement of the set objectives, but also areas in which the results thus far achieved lag behind the expectations of the international community. The Czech Republic is well aware that, after such a long and bloody conflict, impatience with slow progress in the solution of certain problems would be out of place. Nevertheless, we share the positions of international organizations, United Nations Member States and in particular of the Peace Implementation Council that more rapid progress could have been made in the civilian part of the reconstruction. Such progress would undoubtedly have a positive effect on the situation of the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the process of economic revitalization and on the strengthening of the State structure, as well as on the extent of assistance provided by the international community.

The Czech Republic views the good results that have been steadily achieved in the implementation of the military aspects of the Dayton Peace Agreement as a positive and hopeful trend. I am glad to state that the Czech mechanized battalion — operating in the sector that is under British command — through its involvement and activities since the arrival of the multinational force led by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, has also had a modest role in this success. Naturally, we highly value the tireless efforts of the United Nations, the Office of the High Representative, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other international organizations whose engagement in various fields in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina remains quite indispensable.

Thanks to the extended mandate of the High Representative, the last six months have seen progress on issues that until then seemed hopelessly blocked, such as common State symbols, common currency, common car licence plates, common passports and so forth. However, in spite of all the positive achievements, the present system of functioning of common institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not sustainable. We believe that all these activities will be gradually assumed by effectively functioning bodies of local legislative and executive power.

Indeed, a number of key problems are yet to be solved to achieve further progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina, to ensure integrity of the State borders and to set up a transparent and clear legal order and its practical application — just to mention the essential ones. We hope the trend towards national democracy and the development of good-neighbourly relations will continue in all entities. Thus far, the relations and contacts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its entities with many countries of the world are much better than those with their direct neighbours.

Unfortunately, though this year was proclaimed "the year of return" and the repatriation of refugees and displaced persons forms one of the pillars of the Dayton Peace Agreement, no substantial progress has been made in this field. Most of the total of about 1.3 million refugees remain abroad. Those refugees who have returned were heading for the regions that are under the control of their own entity. That is why the international community should support with concerted efforts the so-called minority returns.

One of the main reasons for the small number of returnees is the ominous economic situation in their country. Economic restoration therefore appears to be one of the basic prerequisites for the future of the country. It is of utmost importance to direct international assistance to all regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This has now been facilitated by the positive trend in the Republika Srpska. However, economic growth can hardly be expected without fundamental economic reforms, including privatization and restructuring, and without active support by the population.

The Czech Republic highly regards the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and fully supports the investigation of and just punishment for all crimes committed during the conflict.

Although we must admit certain partial progress in cooperation with the Tribunal over the past year, its level in general is far from ideal. The Czech Republic therefore fully endorses Security Council resolution 1207 (1998) of 17 November 1998, condemning the refusal by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to cooperate with the Tribunal.

In our view, the high turnout of Bosnians in the elections held last September and the smooth conduct of those elections, give a positive signal for the future. The voters clearly demonstrated their concern about the stabilization of the country and their ability to take the fate of the country in their own hands.

In conclusion, I would like to recall the active involvement of my country in the process of post-war reconstruction and economic revitalization of Bosnia and Herzegovina, providing both human and material resources. The Czech Republic has representatives in international organizations operating in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and has been regularly sending its observers to monitor the elections. Apart from its participation in the economic reconstruction, my country is also participating in the funding of humanitarian projects and democratic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This year we have contributed, *inter alia*, to the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, set up by the Government of Slovenia, to the Chamber for Human Rights and to the programme for strengthening the independence of the mass media. I would like to point out the determination of my country to further engage in this assistance, and thus also in the nation-building process in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in its reintegration into Europe at all levels.

Mr. Fedotov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The Russian Federation, while actively participating in international efforts for a Bosnian settlement, welcomes the degree of progress achieved in the implementation of the Peace Agreement. We consistently proceed from the premise that this process must be carried out in strict compliance with the Peace Agreement, Security Council resolutions and other international documents for a settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina and must not allow for an arbitrary interpretation of the existing mandates for international machinery.

Almost three years of experience in international efforts to implement the Peace Agreement have convincingly shown that the key to a successful completion of the process for a settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina is in the hands of the Bosnian parties themselves and in the authoritative bodies they themselves elect.

The current level of international support cannot be maintained indefinitely. This requires from all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina concrete additional steps designed to demonstrate in practice the existence of political commitment for the implementation of the Dayton provisions, the achievement of genuine inter-ethnic reconciliation and an effective post-conflict reconstruction of the country on democratic bases.

We proceed from the premise that on the whole, the draft resolution under consideration today is geared to achieve the aforementioned goals and to promote further headway in the process for a Bosnian settlement. We are grateful to the sponsors for the additional revisions, and we agree with the consensus. We note in particular some clarifications in the provisions pertaining to the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

The Russian Federation consistently supports the activities of the International Criminal Tribunal, carried out in accordance with the mandate assigned by the Security Council and the Peace Agreement. We firmly proceed from the premise that all States must fulfil the relevant international commitments in cooperation with the Tribunal.

At the same time, we strongly reject attempts to expand the concept of such cooperation to the extent of conducting of previously planned armed operations to seize suspects. The Peace Agreement, the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Statute of the International Tribunal clearly state that the extradition to The Hague of individuals accused of war crimes should be carried out exclusively through cooperation with the parties themselves at the Tribunal. Such an approach should be strictly adhered to in practice. Any departure from it — in particular, any unjustified pressure from the parties — can only lead to a serious complication of the situation and render more difficult the process of a peace settlement.

We understand the desire to clarify the circumstances of the tragic events that have taken place in the context of the conflict in Bosnia, especially with regard to missing persons in the Srebrenica safe area. We expect that such information will cover events relating to other safe areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina, without disregarding the very concept of such areas, with all of the inherent internal contradictions they display from the outset.

The Russian Federation will continue to make a constructive, practical contribution to the settlement of remaining issues for a Bosnian settlement and the restoration of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a unified, democratic and multi-ethnic State.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): The issue of democracy in a multi-ethnic State is one that political philosophers, political scientists and human rights activists have long grappled with. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina bears witness to this human endeavour. Unlike earlier thinkers who were sceptical about the prospects for democracy and free institutions in a country made up of different nationalities, contemporary thinking banks on the general growth of human society and holds that designing democratic institutions in multi-ethnic States is not only possible, but also necessary; and the magic word is reconciliation. Such institutions can be built only in a creative way that reconciles the legitimate interests of different communities, based on local conditions.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has made a good start in the right direction with the help of the international community. A lot more needs to be done in that country, particularly by the peoples of the different communities themselves. There is a limit to the help that the international community can offer in terms of institutionalizing democracy in any multi-ethnic State, including Bosnia and Herzegovina. The international community must be credited for many positive developments in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in terms of bringing forcible change by, for example, loosening the grip of the parties and leaders that fuel ethnic divisions, overseeing elections, carrying out "snatch" operations against indicted war criminals, conducting international military operations in Banja Luka and seizing the transmitter of Bosnian Serb television.

However, Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to suffer from the lack of ethnic security. This continues to be the underlying reason for conflict within the country and for the lack of trust between ethnic groups. Ethnically based parties and leaders represent the narrow interests, or what they deem to be the interests, of that one ethnic group and feel no sympathy or obligation to the rest of Bosnia's people. Rather than seeking accommodation, these parties and leaders will view every political move as a zero-sum game in which a distinct line is drawn between the loser and the winner.

It is said that time heals all wounds. Time may also heal wounds inflicted along ethnic lines — wounds as gross and as unconscionable as those inflicted primarily against Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina — provided that justice prevails and the wounded perceive it as such. In this context, the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has much more far-reaching effects than serving just desserts to war criminals, which in and of itself is crucially important.

It is our firm conviction that the unhindered prosecution of indicted individuals will tremendously help justice to prevail and be seen itself as justice, have a cooling effect on ethnic conflict and hatred and, as such, enhance the prospects for reconciliation and integration in that region. Hence, my delegation fully supports Security Council resolution 1207 (1998), in which the Council reiterates the obligation of States to comply with requests for assistance or orders issued by a Trial Chamber, to execute arrest warrants transmitted to them by the Tribunal, and to comply with its requests for information and investigation. In paragraph 3 of that resolution, the Council also

> "condemns the failure to date of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to execute the arrest warrants issued by the Tribunal against the three individuals..., and demands the immediate and unconditional execution of those arrest warrants, including the transfer to the custody of the Tribunal of those individuals".

My Government continues to be concerned about the ongoing obstructions faced by refugees and displaced persons wishing to return to their homes, in particular in areas where they would be an ethnic minority. We fully support the efforts of the international community, the United Nations and, above all, the Bosnian people to implement the Peace Agreement with a view to achieving a durable and just peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, leading to stability and cooperation in the region and the reintegration of that country at all levels. In this context, my delegation fully supports the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.55.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): Slovenia aligns itself with the statement made at the beginning of this meeting by the Permanent Representative of Austria on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries. In addition to that, we wish to make the following points.

Three years have passed since the conclusion of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the most devastating and brutal armed conflict in Europe since the Second World War. The ordeal of the war in Bosnia brought lessons of global importance. It was a war of aggression against an emerging State, as well as a war of particular brutality. The world was reminded again that genocide — or, as it was named in the case of Bosnia, "ethnic cleansing" — is a real possibility, which can happen if the international community fails to help the weak and defenceless victims of aggression.

The war came to an end in 1995 after a series of military defeats of the forces of aggression. The changed military situation encouraged the international community to intervene with decisive military and political power. The Dayton Peace Agreement created a framework for life in peace and laid the foundation of the new constitutional structure of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its conclusion and gradual implementation represent a genuine international achievement.

However, several essential elements of the Agreement remain to be fulfilled. The refugees and internally displaced persons are returning in far too small numbers. The rate of minority returns is particularly low. The common political institutions are still not functioning adequately. National reconciliation, democratization and economic recovery are at the very starting point and the police force is being reconstructed and democratized at a varying pace, depending on the entities and cantons.

The point of irreversibility of the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina has not yet been reached. It would be much too soon for the international community to leave Bosnia and Herzegovina now. The country is still in the delicate phase of post-conflict peace-building. The international presence and responsibility for peace and development in Bosnia and Herzegovina will therefore be necessary for some time longer before the phase of a self-sustaining peace is reached. We hope to be able to relate in the future to Bosnia and Herzegovina as an example of successful international involvement that brought the country from the midst of conflict to a democratic multi-ethnic society and to a situation of economic prosperity and integration within the broader region of Europe.

The return of refugees and internally displaced persons is one of the most critical conditions for lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The international community proclaimed 1998 as the year of return. Disappointingly, the figures are far from the expected and targeted ones. The lack of success regarding the returns is yet another proof of how delicate the peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina still is and how determined and firm the international community must be in implementing the Peace Agreement.

Firmness and determination are necessary in all aspects of peace-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Slovenia is of the view that all those who committed crimes against humanity and are responsible for or participated in the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina must be brought to justice. Until they are, the process of reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina will be significantly constrained. We commend the efforts of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in bringing justice to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Justice is a necessary condition for the establishment of durable peace. We are pleased to note the willingness of the High Representative and the Commander of the Stabilization Force to use their authority to enforce the provisions of the Peace Agreement, including provisions concerning compliance with the orders of the Tribunal.

An additional and essential component of peace and national reconciliation is the need to clarify the fate of more than 19,000 missing persons, including and in particular more than 7,000 civilians from the United Nations designated safe area of Srebrenica. Our delegation took note of the statement made earlier in this discussion by the Permanent Representative of Hungary, who spoke in some detail and with great persuasiveness about Srebrenica, and we share his sentiments. We look forward to the comprehensive and analytical report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, which he will prepare in accordance with the draft resolution that the General Assembly will adopt today.

Demining is one of the areas that Slovenia considers especially important to the normalization of life in Bosnia and Herzegovina at this stage. Successful demining will enable a more adequate return of refugees and help to restore economic activity in the country. These are some of the reasons why Slovenia established the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina in March 1998. The main purpose of the initiative is humanitarian in nature: to help civilians, victims of anti-personnel mines, as well as

other victims of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. With its initiative, Slovenia is trying to contribute to the strengthening of the process of post-conflict peace-building and rehabilitation in Bosnia.

Before concluding, I wish to touch upon an unresolved issue, the solution of which would also contribute positively to the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina: that of the succession of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which has ceased to exist. The Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina spoke on this issue earlier and we share his opinion. The negotiations on succession continue to be blocked by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro). This circumstance continues to hamper the process of normalization of relations among the successor States of the former Yugoslavia and has an adverse effect on economic and political stability in the region. We hope that the forthcoming meeting in Madrid of the Peace Implementation Council will contribute to the search for an effective approach to resolving the issues of succession.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize the importance of the continued interest of the United Nations and its General Assembly in post-conflict peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a global issue it must remain the concern of the world's foremost political body: the United Nations General Assembly. We hope that the draft resolution submitted for action by the General Assembly today will be adopted by consensus and that the content of this draft resolution, of which Slovenia is proud to be a sponsor, will guide the action of all those involved in the effort to establish just and durable peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. Before proceeding to consider the draft resolution before us, I call on the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Sacirbey (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Briefly, on just one minor technical change in the draft resolution since we started drafting it. I have just been informed that in paragraph 15, the proper designation for what has been termed in the draft resolution "the Intermediate Media Standards and Licensing Commission" should be "INDEPENDENT MEDIA COMMISSION", all capital letters. So we take out the words "Intermediate Media Standards and Licensing Commission" and replace them with "INDEPENDENT MEDIA COMMISSION".

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/53/L.55, as orally revised. I should like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Bangladesh, Germany, Singapore and Tunisia.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt draft resolution A/53/L.55, as orally revised?

Draft resolution A/53/L.55, as orally revised, was adopted (resolution 53/35).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 41?

It was so decided.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 12 and 118.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401 the General Assembly agreed that when the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, that is, either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee.

May I remind delegations that also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we shall proceed to take decisions in the same manner as

was done in the Fifth Committee, unless the Secretariat is notified otherwise.

Agenda item 12 *(continued)*

Report of the Economic and Social Council

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/694)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft decision recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 4 of its report.

May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt the draft decision?

The draft decision was adopted.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of those chapters of the report of the Economic and Social Council which were allocated to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 118 *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/464/Add.2)

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 9 of its report.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/36).

The Acting President: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 118.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.